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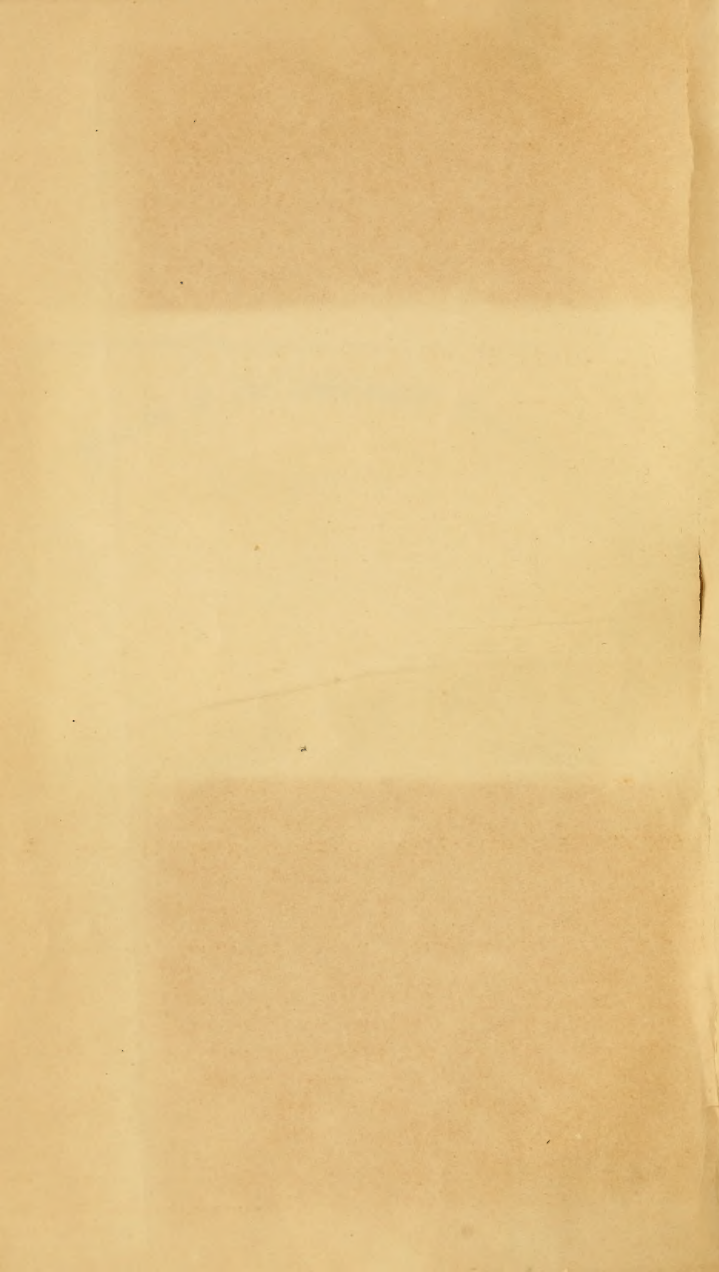
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AN
EXPOSITION
OF
THE PARABLES

AND OF OTHER PARTS OF

THE GOSPELS,

✓
BY EDWARD GRESWELL, B. D.

FELLOW OF C. C. C. OXFORD.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PARABLE FIRST. ALLEGORICAL.

THE SOWER AND THE SEED.

MATTHEW XIII. 1—9. MARK IV. 1—9. LUKE VIII. 4—8.

HARMONY, P. III. 16.

MATTHEW xiii. 1—9.

¹ And in that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side. ² And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went himself into the ship, and sate; and all the multitude was standing on the shore. ³ And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went forth to sow. ⁴ And in his sowing, some *seeds* fell beside the way; and the fowls came, and ate them up. ⁵ And others fell on the rocky parts, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprang up, because they had not depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was risen, they were scorched; and because they had not root, they were dried up. ⁷ And others fell on the thorns; and the thorns got up and choked them. ⁸ And others fell on the good ground, and yielded fruit, some an hundred-fold, and some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. ⁹ He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

MARK iv. 1—9.

¹ And again he began to teach by the sea-side: and a great multitude was gathered together unto him, so that he went himself into the ship, and sate in the sea; and all the multitude was on the land by the sea. ² And he began to teach them many things in parables; and said to them in his teaching, ³ “Hearken. Behold, the sower went forth to sow. ⁴ And it came to pass,

“ in his sowing, some fell beside the way ; and the fowls of
 “ the air came, and ate it up. ⁵ And other fell on the rocky
 “ part, where it had not much earth ; and forthwith it sprang
 “ up, because it had not depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun
 “ was risen, it was scorched ; and because it had not root, it was
 “ dried up. ⁷ And other fell into the thorns ; and the thorns
 “ got up and choked it, and it yielded not fruit. ⁸ And other
 “ fell into the good ground, and yielded fruit, getting up and
 “ increasing ; and it bore some thirtyfold, and some sixtyfold,
 “ and some an hundredfold.” ⁹ And he said unto them, “ He
 “ that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

LUKE viii. 4—8.

⁴ And a great multitude coming together, and the people in
 one city after another resorting unto him, he said by a parable:
⁵ “ The sower went forth to sow his seed. And in his sow-
 “ ing, some fell beside the way ; and it was trodden down,
 “ and the fowls of the air ate it up. ⁶ And other fell on the
 “ rock ; and when it was grown, it was dried up, because it had
 “ not moisture. ⁷ And other fell in the midst of the thorns ;
 “ and the thorns grew with it, and choked it. ⁸ And other
 “ fell on the good ground, and grew, and produced fruit an
 “ hundredfold.” As he said these things, he cried, “ He that
 “ hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE parable of the sower is not only the first of
 the parables on record, but by its peculiar simplicity
 is eminently qualified to be so. In the conceptions
 of human genius, and in the productions of human
 skill, it commonly happens that the original essays
 are the least perfect ; and not unfrequently, the
 rudest specimens of their kind. Improvement and
 accuracy keep pace with experience ; and a consum-
 mate representation of the ideas of the artist, though
 the first thing to be proposed, is the last to be ac-
 complished.

Perhaps, therefore, it was not without some regard to the fitness of things, to the appearance of probability and consistency, in the repeated use of a particular means of instruction, and to the experience of human observation in cases of a similar nature, that when our Saviour began to teach in parables, he did so with parables as simple and inartificial as possible; and when he resumed his teaching in the same way, he resumed it with others of a more elaborate and diversified character. The mind which conceived all the parables of the gospel narrative, might certainly have rendered the first of its productions as complete and perfect as the last. It was also possible for the last in succession to have been delivered first, and the first to have been delivered last. But had this been the case, what would have become of that admirable climax, by which, as they now stand, they appear to rise in so regular a manner, one above another, as more and more exquisite specimens of the same kind of compositions? Any one may become sensible of this climax, by comparing either of the longer parables, first delivered, with those of the prodigal son, of the labourers in the vineyard, and of the wedding garment. How much should we perceive to be detracted from the beauty and propriety of their general arrangement, were such parables as these last the earliest, and the parable of the sower the latest, that presented itself.

So far, indeed, as the allegorical parables more especially, whensoever delivered, are more or less connected in their proper moral—the common rule of proceeding with respect to the disclosures of which such parables are the vehicles, is this—that the first

made are invariably the simplest, and least extensive. Subsequent discoveries resume, particularize, and enlarge the former; and the representations under which they are conveyed, are enlarged and diversified also. The concealed meaning of the present parable itself is such, that if it was to be disguised in the shape of allegory, it would require to be so under an external form of corresponding simplicity.

This characteristic simplicity of the parable of the sower is not due to the *generic* nature of its material image, as taken from *real* life, for that is the case with all our Lord's parables, whether more or less complex in other respects; nor yet to its *specific* nature, as derived from a circumstance of rustic life, for that also is true of parables much more elaborate than this. It is due to the fact, that it turns upon nothing but the mere process of sowing; a process, in itself the simplest that can be imagined. The history of such a process could involve no distinctions of agents personally concerned in it, beyond the supposition of some proper party to sow the seed; no difference of subject matter, besides the seed to be scattered; no greater variety of circumstances, than the possible diversity of results, in the failure or success of the crop. Such a representation could exhibit nothing of the nature of a moral action; but would be purely mechanical or physical.

It is a consequence of the same simplicity, that little would seem to be necessary in explanation of the material circumstances of the narrative. Images, derived immediately from the habits of daily life, and more especially those of rustic life, will be every where more or less applicable, and therefore every where more or less intelligible. No one needs to be

told what the process of sowing denotes ; and even the parabolic description of that process, though accommodated to the climate and soil of Judæa, with little allowance for difference of place would be equally suitable, and would be more or less agreeable to experience in the results of such a process, every where else.

There are some observations, however, which may be made even on the material constitution of the parable ; and some circumstances of explanation, which it is still necessary to premise, in order to proceed to the consideration of its scope and import.

As first ; if a narrative, like this, which selects for its groundwork one of the most familiar processes of rural life, should appear to be deficient in dignity, it ought to be remembered that the perception of beauty, decorum, elevation, in any subject, and with any reference whatever, depends on the habits and prepossessions of the observer, as much as on the nature of things. The occupations of rural life, whether dignified or not in themselves, possessed a peculiar charm, and were peculiarly ennobled, in the opinion of antiquity. There is not a more characteristic distinction between the habits or principles of society in former times, and those of modern, than the exclusive, and as it seems to us, overweening partiality, which the ancients entertained for agriculture. Among the Greeks and Romans, all other employments, however lucrative and profitable, were pronounced to be mercenary and sordid, worthy only of slaves, or the dregs of the people ; but this was considered honourable and liberal ; the privilege of the free, the great, the most virtuous and noble alone : this they supposed

the personal occupation of their heroes and legislators, the greatest benefactors of their country or mankind; and not unfrequently the delight and pastime even of their gods ^a.

Of the nations of antiquity, none were more likely to cherish this prepossession in favour of agriculture, than the Jews. The founders of their community in general; the ancestors of every tribe in particular; the chosen instruments of their deliverance from Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan; the greatest and most glorious of their judges and kings, had each been shepherds and husbandmen in their turns. Private wealth among them consisted in flocks and herds, in fields and vineyards, and in the several productions of each. From the occupations of trade they were in a great measure debarred by their law itself; which had forbidden them all intercourse with other nations, and so shut them out from the gainful avenues of commerce. Hence, at no period in their history,

^a The praises of agriculture are indeed a topic on which the classical writers, both Greek and Roman, delight to expatiate. See Xenoph. Œcon. v.—Maximus Tyrius, Diss. xxx—Cicero. de Senectute, xv—xvii—Virgil. Georgic. ii. 458—540—Horat. Epod. ii—Ovid. de Remed. Amoris, 169—198—Plin. H. N. xviii. i—vi.

Cicero, de Officiis, i. 42: Omnium autem rerum, ex quibus aliquid acquiritur, nihil est agricultura melius, nihil uberius, nihil dulcius, nihil homine, nihil libero dignius.

Dionysius Halicarn. A. R. ii. 28, speaking of the institutions of Romulus, says: ἐπιδηφρίους μὲν, καὶ βαναύσους, καὶ προσαγωγούς ἐπιθυμιῶν αἰσχυρῶν τέχναις. . . . δούλοις καὶ ξένοις ἐπέδωκε μεθοδεύειν καὶ ἰδιέμεινεν ἕως πολλοῦ χρόνου δι' αἰσχύνης ὄντα Ῥωμαίους τὰ τοιαῦτα ἔργα, καὶ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς τῶν αὐθιγενῶν ἐπιτηδεύμενα. δύο δὲ μόνα τοῖς ἐλευθέροις ἐπιτηδεύματα καταλείπεται, τὰ κατὰ γεωργίαν καὶ τὰ κατὰ πολέμους, κ', τ. λ.

before the dispersion, except for a short time during the reign of Solomon, do they make any figure as a commercial people. They were essentially, from the highest to the lowest, a pastoral and rural community; delighting in a country life, and from their earliest infancy, by long habit and association, prejudiced in favour of its occupations and pleasures.

No description then, like that of the parable, could possibly appear wanting in dignity or propriety, to an ancient audience, especially of Jews. And the material image itself, however simple, is yet of an agreeable kind; being taken from a part of the labours of the field, which has as little to offend, and as much to amuse, the imagination as any. In the whole of the description, we are presented with a rural picture of consummate truth and keeping; every part of which is enlivened with a minuteness of colouring and finished with an accuracy of touch, that leave nothing to be desired to the perfection of the representation: and from the beginning of the process, to that just consummation, which rewards the toils of the sower by the abundance of the crop, the mind is entertained with a succession of grateful, or at least not displeasing images; as diversified as the nature of the case will admit, and not more diversified than natural.

Again; it will be seen from the arrangement of this part of the Gospel history, in my Harmony, that the time when these parables were delivered, was not much later than the feast of tabernacles, in the second year of our Saviour's ministry. If so, it coincided with seed time in the Jewish year, which commonly began about a month after that feast. With singular propriety, therefore, might this junc-

ture be chosen, for the delivery of a series of parables, almost all of which exhibit an allusion to the labours of the field; and three of them, more particularly, to the preliminary part of those labours, the sowing of the grain, which is destined, in due time, to give birth to the crop: and this coincidence would be one among the many illustrations which the Gospels supply, of our Saviour's practice of deriving his topics not only from the scenes of real life, but from the passing occurrences of the time; and of the peculiar appositeness, force, and liveliness, by that means communicated to them. The fact of some such coincidence might have been inferred from the picturesque nature of the description itself. A parable full of such striking images was probably drawn from real life, and suggested by the presence and contemplation of similar scenes in the surrounding country. For at seed-time in the Jewish year, every field was capable of furnishing such pictures; and there was this additional reason to give more animation than usual to the busy scenes about our Saviour, in the fertile region of Gennesaret, that the middle of the second year of his ministry coincided not only with the ordinary period of seed-time, but also with the close of a year of rest^b. After a whole year's intermission, the labours of agriculture would be resumed, with more activity and more assiduity than ever. A parable delivered under such circumstances, and falling in critically with the interest and employment of the moment, could not fail to appear peculiarly well timed and appropriate.

But to proceed. As the sowing of the grain is

^b Dissertation, vii. App. vol. ii. 218 sqq.

necessary to the raising and maturing of the crop, so is the breaking up or tilling of the ground, to the sowing of the grain. The action of the parable, therefore, which begins with the sowing of the seed, supposes whatever was preliminary to the commencement of the process, to be past. This observation may be of importance to a further question which will require to be discussed hereafter: and in the mean time it illustrates the decorum and beauty of the parable, which by confining itself to the latter part of such a process as the bringing of the fruits of the ground to maturity, by human labour, confines itself to the most agreeable part of all. The preparation of the ground is certainly a part of the process, and as indispensable as any; but it is the most toilsome and laborious, and in comparison of the rest of the process, by which the seed, once committed to the ground, is at length brought to perfection, it is the least attractive to the imagination.

The action of the parable, however, which begins with the sowing of the grain, extends to the maturity of the crop. Hence, while it must be supposed to commence at the usual seed-time in Judæa, it cannot be considered to end until the ordinary period of harvest. The entire duration of its action, then, lasts from the natural time of sowing the grain to the natural time of reaping its fruit; that is, through all, or nearly all, the seasons of the year. And this observation too, will not be unserviceable in explaining one or two circumstances of the description; which we shall have occasion to notice hereafter. As to the species of grain, which is supposed to be sown, it is not expressly mentioned; nor in fact, was it necessary that it should be. We are

at liberty to suppose, it was some kind or other, conducive to the support of human life, and probably one of the two nobler sorts, wheat or barley, besides which scarcely any were much cultivated in Palestine. Seed-time for either of these, in Judæa, might be nearly the same, beginning in November, and extending to the end of December; but the reaping time was different. The barley was commonly ripe about the feast of Passover, the wheat, about the feast of Pentecost; between which there was seven weeks' interval. The harvest for the former would be in March or April; and for the latter, in May or June.

The scene of the action, though, as the recipient of the grain, necessarily some duly prepared soil, need not be considered a single field, but very possibly a region or tract of land, consisting of many fields. Such a supposition accords better to the mention of the various situations, and even the diversities of soil, on which the seed when sown, is described to fall; diversities, not so naturally to be expected within the compass of a single field, as in the various fields of a large estate. Nor is the language of the several evangelists inconsistent with this construction: for two of them, St. Matthew and St. Mark, simply assert the fact that the sower went forth to sow, without specifying *where*; and the third, St. Luke, that he went forth to sow, τὸν σπόρον αὐτοῦ: which means, not "his seed," but "his crop of seed." It is equivalent therefore to the assertion, that the sower went forth to sow *his fields* with his seed; that is, to provide for the future harvest by sowing his seed wherever he designed it to grow, or wherever the lands of his estate were fit

to be devoted to its growth. We should conclude from such a description, that the owner of an extensive farm was causing his cornlands to be all sown with grain at the proper season, rather than that the master of a single field was preparing to do the same with it.

Again, though seed indiscriminately scattered in the process of sowing must alight in more situations than one; yet the possible varieties of position in which it might fall, would necessarily depend on the peculiarities of the ground, where it was sown. Were the field contiguous to the high road, or had it a pathway through it—part of the grain, in the act of being scattered, might fall upon, or by the road side. Either of these suppositions will answer to the description in the parable, that part of the seed, in the act of sowing, fell by the way side. High roads there are in all countries, which possess the least degree of refinement, and the parts of which carry on any intercourse with each other; and high roads, that in different points of their progress, will necessarily run parallel to cornfields. Thoroughfares and pathways too, there must everywhere be, for the mutual convenience of neighbouring places, which may pass even through cornfields: and these would be more frequent in ancient times, because high roads were less common. A right of way, through the arable lands, at certain seasons of the year, if not at all times, is reckoned by the Jewish rabbis one of the ten constitutions of Joshua; or of what may be called the common law of the land. A pathway of this description is most probably meant by the parable; for though

in the act of disseminating seed all over the surface of a field, some portion of it might be thrown even into the public road, beyond it, it is more likely, or rather it could scarcely fail to happen, that however carefully the business of sowing were performed, some of the grain would fall beside, or upon a thoroughfare within the field itself.

Again, in a field surrounded by fences, if those fences consisted of thorns, part of the seed, in the act of being sown, might alight in the hedge, upon the ground preoccupied by the thorns which composed it. This too is one of the suppositions in the parable; to the probability of which nothing more is necessary than the assumption that anciently in Judæa, as well as still among ourselves, fields were divided by boundaries, and boundaries marked by hedges, and hedges were made of thorns. Corn fields, in particular, stand in more need of such protection, from the inroads of various animals, than pasture lands. The use of the article too, in speaking of these thorns, will be a proof to the classical reader that they were understood by the speaker, to be an ordinary part of the constitution of corn fields; or were to be met with at least, wherever grain was sown. The word which expresses these materials, in the original, may be construed of any prickly shrub, like the brier or bramble, no less than of that strong and vigorous one, so well adapted for defending, as well as dividing fields, which we mean by the thorn. It will be seen from the testimonies produced below, that fences of both sorts might exist in Judæa; and any description of thorn will answer to the representation in the parable, which was only to be found

in the neighbourhood of corn fields, liable to spring up with the grain, and at last to outgrow it^c.

^c We may collect, from various passages of the Old Testament, that thorns either constituted the fence of corn fields, or were to be found growing in their vicinity. Exod. xxii. 6: "If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field be consumed *therewith*:" whence also it appears, that the thorns in question were not like ours, but of a light combustible nature; such as bushes of brier or bramble might be. "They have sown wheat," says Jeremiah, xii. 13. "but shall reap *thorns*:" which likewise implies that these thorns might spring up naturally in the midst of *corn fields*; and therefore were more like *weeds* than *shrubs*. Briers and thorns are mentioned, Isaiah v. 6: vii. 23—25: as what might be the natural productions of vineyards, fields, cultivated grounds; instead of their proper ones. It appears too from Isaiah vii. 19: ix. 18: x. 17: that they were to be found in the deserts and open places, intermixed with the trees of the forest as such, like brakes or underwood. And from Isaiah xxxiii. 12: that they were treated as *weeds*; cut down at certain times of the year, and burned, like other refuse of the field: most probably at the same time with the stubble and chaff. On this principle they might naturally spring up with the sown seed itself; grow with its growth, and at last outstrip and choke it, where they grew together.

That seed might fall among such thorns, in the process of sowing, especially in parts not disturbed by the plough, appears from Jeremiah iv. 3: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." That the ripe grain might be overrun with them may be inferred from Job v. 5: "Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the *thorns*:" which further implies that such a crop was worth little or nothing, the thorns had choked the wheat.

The natural tendency of such thorns to twine and twist themselves together, is noticed, Nahum i. 10: "For while *they be* folden together *as* thorns, and while they are drunken *as* drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry."

Nec præfocata malignum

Messis habet lolium, nec inertibus albet avenis.

Calpurnius, Eclog. iv. 115.

Again, in a field more or less richly qualified, in its different parts, for the support of vegetable life; or in a tract of country, containing a diversity of soils, some better than others; the seed, though falling on ground obviously set apart for its reception, and apparently equally well adapted to receive it, might fall more or less advantageously for its growth at first, and be more or less productive at last. These too are cases recognised by the parable, which speaks not only of seed that fell on the way side, or among thorns, but of that which alighted on the rock, or as some of the evangelists express it, on the rocky parts; and besides, of that which fell upon the good ground.

The first of these suppositions is consistent with the natural peculiarities of Judæa; which being almost throughout a land of hills and valleys, contained in many parts strata of rocks, approaching more or less nearly to the surface^d. We must not,

Ischomachus asks this question of Socrates, Xenoph. Œcon. xvii. 14: *Τί γάρ; ἔφη, ἦν ὕλη πνίγη συνεξορμῶσα τῷ σίτῳ, καὶ διαρπάξουσα τοῦ σίτου τὴν τροφήν, ὥσπερ οἱ κηφῆνες διαρπάξουσιν ἄχρηστοι ὄντες τῶν μελισσῶν, ἃ ἂν ἐκείναι ἐργασάμεναι τροφήν καταθῶνται;*

That hedges, however, in Judæa may now be found composed of thorns as such, is certainly the case; and that thorns were so employed anciently may perhaps be collected from Micah vii. 4: "The best of them *is* a brier: the most upright *is* sharper " than a thorn hedge." Jerome seems to describe this kind of thorn under the name of *setta*: *Est autem genus arboris nascentis in eremo, spinæ albæ habens similitudinem*: iii. 314. *ad med.* in Isaïæ xli.

^d Herodotus says, of the natural character of the soil of Arabia and Syria, in which he includes Palestine, that it was *ἀργιλωδεστέρα* and *ὑπόπετρος*. Lib. ii. 12.

Theophrastus speaks of Syria as generally *ὑπόπετρος*; and says, that if the ground were turned up too deep by the plough,

however, understand by this description the naked or stony surface, but the rock partially covered with earth. The site of the portion of grain, which fell there, was properly on shallow ground; not where it could possess no soil at all, as on the bare top of a rock, but merely no depth of soil.

The good ground, on the other hand, where the rest of the grain is supposed to fall, that did not alight in any of the above situations—for that very reason, and as it is clearly implied by the contrast of the epithet which describes its character in opposition to their's, certainly denotes a situation, neither like that of the wayside, nor of the thorns, nor of the rock; and consequently free from such impediments to the growth, and dangers to the well-being of the seed, as these; yet possibly not equally excellent throughout, and in some parts more advantageous to the increase of seed, than in others. That there should be good ground, as well as bad, in every tract of land set apart for the growth of corn, is as much to be expected as the contrary; and that there should be differences of quality even in good ground, so as to make some parts of a tract of land, devoted to the culture of corn, better than others, is equally probable.

it would all be burnt up by the heat of the summer: for which reason, he observes, the Syrians used small (that is, short and shallow) ploughs. *De Caus. Plant.* iii. 25, 290.

Harmer quotes Maundrell, and other travellers, to prove that the surface of Judæa is in many parts rocky, and covered only with a *thin coat* of soil. *Vol. i.* 33. ch. 1. obs. ix.

Matt. vii. 24, 25: *Luke* vi. 48, the use of *τὴν πέτραν*, in each instance, absolutely, implies that dig where a person might in Judæa, if he only dug deep enough, he would come to *the rock* at last.

It appears from the above representation, that though in each instance the grain supposed to be sown is one and the same; and the agent, by whom it is sown, is one and the same; yet the recipients of it, when sown, the situations, on which it was liable to fall, are four in number, the wayside, the rocky ground, the thorns, and the good ground. Now as the seed was sown that it might take root, and flourish, and mature its fruit; and as the account of the sowing was manifestly incomplete without some account of the effects resulting from it; so it is easy to see how far the end of the sowing would be answered, and what must be the subsequent fortunes of the seed, according as it fell on one or other of the situations in question.

For first, if the seed fell on the wayside, as falling on an open situation, it would be exposed to the birds, which frequent corn-fields, and follow the plough^e: as falling in the midst of a thoroughfare, it might be crushed under foot; as falling on an hard and trampled surface, if it escaped every other danger, it could never strike its roots into the ground. On all these accounts, it would be liable to a speedy destruction; it could not survive to spring and flourish.

Again, if the grain fell on the rocky ground, where it would be slightly covered in the earth, but possess no depth of soil, it might speedily take root, and spring up, and for a time grow luxuriantly. But the action of the parable extends from seed-time to harvest, in the natural year; and therefore, as the year advanced to maturity, and the sun be-

^e Such birds were called *σπερμολόγοι*, that is, pickers of seeds.

came more powerful, the supplies of nourishment which such a site was competent to furnish the plants upon it, would soon be exhausted; and the plants, growing there, would consequently droop and perish. The heat of the sun in the climate of Judæa, after the cessation of the last or vernal rains, and its parching effects on the herbage of the country, are too well known to require any particular illustration.

Again, though the seed, which was liable to fall on the thorns, or as St. Luke expresses it, *in the midst* of the thorns, might not be prevented, in such a situation, from taking hold of the ground, it would be prevented from arriving at perfection. It would be stifled, as it grew up. I have already shewn that the thorns in question were probably more like briars or brambles, than what we understand by thorns: which, nevertheless, might serve to defend, as well as to mark out the boundaries of cornfields, and while the corn was on the ground would be allowed to grow, but at the time of reaping and securing the crop, were usually burnt along with the stubble, the chaff, and the other refuse of the grain. Such thorns, therefore, would be liable to grow again every year, at the same time as other vegetable substances, that annually revive and spring. They would grow up, then, along with the grain, which had taken root among them, as it is implied that they did, both by the expression, (ἀνέβησαν,) “got up,” in St. Matthew and St. Mark, and that of (συμφυεῖσαι,) “grew with it,” in St. Luke. But though both had begun to grow together, yet the natural rankness of the thorns would enable

them to vegetate faster, and outstrip the growth of the plant. It is the nature of the brier or bramble, to entwine its branches together; which property, added to the superior quickness of its growth, would present an effectual obstacle to the maturity of any other vegetable, growing along with or in the midst of it. Hence, though the circumstance of its position could not prevent the seed from taking hold of the ground, beginning to vegetate, and appearing to live and thrive for a while; it would certainly cause it to be outmastered in its growth, before the time of arriving at maturity. The tangled branches of the thorns, among which it grew, would arrest its progress at last, and shutting it out from the sun and air, which are the life of plants, would finally choke or suffocate it.

Again, the seed which might fall on the good ground, would be liable to no such danger, as the first part of the grain, from mere inability to penetrate the ground, or the risk of exposure, in an open situation; nor to any such hazard as the second, in being scorched up by the sun, through defect of moisture; nor to any mischance, like the third, in being stifled in its growth, before it arrived at maturity: and from all these misfortunes it would be secured by the advantage of its situation itself. Wheresoever it alighted, then, upon its proper soil, it would spring up and flourish, and go on to thrive and increase; until in due season it ripened its fruit.

If however, there might be differences of quality in the soil itself, or if the accidental advantages of some parts were more favourable to the growth of seed than those of others; the seed which happened

to alight in the more congenial situation would flourish more than the rest; and the ultimate increase of some parts might exceed that of the rest. It is not improbable, then, that even in the same field, and much more in a variety of fields, some parts of the grain should be found to yield thirty, some sixty, and some an hundredfold. The moderation of the parable, in supposing the greatest result of all not to exceed an hundredfold, is worthy of notice: for while all Judæa, Peræa, Samaria, and Galilee, were exceedingly fertile, certain parts of the country, according to Josephus^f, were a thousand times more prolific than others. The average rate of its production, in most situations, therefore, was probably not much less than one hundredfold^g.

^f Jos. A. J. v. i. 21. Cf. B. iii. iii. iv. viii. 2. 3.

^g We read in Genesis xxvi. 12: that in the first year of Isaac's residence at Gerar, or Gerara, in the land of Abimelech, he reaped one hundredfold.

To illustrate the suppositions in the parable, and to shew its attention to decorum and probability, in limiting the capabilities of a soil, like that of Judæa, well known to be extremely fertile, to such and such degrees of production, I will subjoin some instances of the capabilities of other soils and other countries, in ancient times, some of them not naturally more fertile than Judæa.

Thus, Herodotus tells us, the soil of Babylonia would ordinarily yield two hundredfold of wheat or barley; and when most productive, three hundredfold: i. 193: Strabo, that Mesopotamia would return barley, in particular, three hundredfold: xvi. i. 14. 269: Theophrastus, that the crops, in Babylonia, required to be twice mown, and once, to be eaten down by sheep, in the blade; otherwise they would run out into leaves: and even then, that the returns were ordinarily fiftyfold, and with diligent culture, one hundredfold: Hist. Pl. viii. 7. Pliny repeats this statement, H. N. xviii. 45.

The region of the Evesperitæ, in Africa, would yield one hun-

From this review of the parabolic narrative, it is evident, that as there were four possible situations, on any one of which the seed, before it was sown, was liable to fall, and on some one of which, when sown, it must necessarily fall; so there was but one, on which, if it happened to fall, it was capable of

dredfold; and that of Cinyps, like Babylonia, three hundredfold: Herod. iv. 198. This last country was proverbially fruitful.

Cinyphiæ segetis citius numerabis aristas,

Altaque quam multis floreat Hybla thymis.

Ovid. Epp. de Ponto, ii. vii. 25.

Byzacium, in Africa, (the parts about Tunis,) would ordinarily yield one hundred, or one hundred and fiftyfold: and had been known to yield, in Augustus' time, of wheat four hundredfold, and in Nero's, three hundred and sixtyfold. Plin. II. N. v. 3. (Cf. Solini Polyh. xxvii. 6.) H. N. xviii. 21.

Leontium in Sicily; all Hispania Bætica; and Egypt in particular, says Pliny, would yield one hundredfold: H. N. xviii. 21.

Strabo insists on the great fertility of parts of Africa, where the straw grew five cubits ($7\frac{1}{2}$ feet) in height, and as thick as the little finger; and the produce was two hundred and fortyfold: xvii. iii. 11. 664. The soil in Persis, about Susa, says he, ordinarily yielded one hundredfold; and sometimes two hundredfold: xv. iii. 11. 217.

Ammianus Marcellinus estimates the average fertility of Egypt at seventy-fivefold: lib. xxii. 15. 335. Heliodorus tells us, that in the island of Meroë wheat and barley would grow high enough to cover a man, mounted on an horse or a camel, and yield three hundredfold: *Æthiopica*, x. 6.

Varro reckons ten or fifteenfold a very fair return for certain places; but that about Sybaris in Italy; Garada (leg. Gadar) in Syria; and in Byzacium of Africa, the soil would yield one hundredfold: *De Re Rust.* i. 44. And Servius reports from him, that when the Lacus Velinus (Pie di Lugo) was drained, such was the richness of the soil in the neighbourhood, the herbage (probably the stalks of corn) grew to the height of a longa pertica (about sixteen feet): *Ad Georgic.* ii. 201: *ad Æneid.* vii. 712.

flourishing; and in which, when it actually fell there, it is actually seen to have flourished. This one is the last and the fourth situation; the three others are consequently the three former. The history of the seed, then, as it fell on any one of these three situations, is the history of its failure and destruction; and its history, as falling on the fourth alone, is the history of its preservation and arrival at maturity.

It appears also, that in none of the four situations is either the failure or success of the seed, the consequence of any defect, or any difference of excellence in the seed, which falls there; but solely of the qualities of the situation. The seed, wheresoever it is sown, is one and the same, and therefore in every situation is equally good in itself, though not equally fortunate in the circumstances of its position. The same part of it, therefore, which is lost, by falling in one site, would have flourished, had it fallen on another; and the very portion which thrives and prospers on the good ground, must have pined away, or miscarried on the bad. The same observation holds good of the sower; whose hand, though it disperses the seed, is yet the cause neither of its success nor its failure in any instance; nor, consequently, is answerable for the results of his act, however different they may be.

It is evident also, that though the cause which produces the success of the result, in the only instance where it succeeds, is one and the same; viz. the natural vegetative power of the seed, assisted by the natural virtue of the soil; yet the causes, which give birth to its miscarriage and failure, are in every instance distinct. On the bare ground, the grain

was exposed to destruction from causes external to the ground; or had it escaped those, yet from the hardness of the ground itself, it could not have struck root, and sprung up. The cause of the failure, in this instance, is consequently either entirely external to the ground, or entirely derived from it. On the shallow ground, the plant was exposed to defect of moisture, and in course of time must necessarily fall a victim to the heat and drought. The cause of the failure in this instance, then, is partly the ground, and partly the violence of something without it; but neither, without the other. In the midst of the thorns, the seed might luxuriate for a time; but would infallibly be stifled in the end, before it could arrive at perfection. The cause of the failure in this instance is, consequently, properly an obstacle external to the ground, and no quality of the ground itself, except *per accidens*; so far as through the misfortune of the situation, it was already preoccupied by thorns, before it received the seed; or was liable to be overrun by them, while nourishing and supporting the seed.

We may observe too, that this external obstacle to the success of the seed, in the third case, is a different thing from the similar obstacle, which produces the like effect, in the second; that is, the choking of the seed by thorns is not the burning of it up, and the drying of its supplies by the sun. Hence, it is obvious to infer, that had the seed which fell on the shallow ground, been able to resist the heat, it would at least have been secure from the choking produced by the thorns; and had that which fell among the thorns, been delivered from this external impediment to its growth, the very vigour and

rankness of the ground would have saved it from perishing by the drought.

We may observe likewise, that though this portion of the seed was strangled at last, it sprang up readily at first, and continued to grow for a time: nor is it, perhaps, without a meaning that the Evangelist St. Mark has subjoined to the simple statement in St. Matthew of its being ultimately stifled, the further circumstance, (*καὶ καρπὸν οὐκ ἔδωκε*), “and “it yielded not fruit;” for this may imply that it was intercepted in its growth, only as it was arriving at maturity. The case of this portion of the grain then, was not, for a time, so bad nor so disadvantageous to the health and prosperity of the plant, as the case of that, which fell on the rocky ground; nor the situation of this, on the other hand, as the circumstances of that which fell on the way side. In the last of these positions, the loss of the seed was certain, inevitable, and immediate; in the second, its destruction was no less certain in the end, but it would not ensue, until the seed had been some time in the ground, and apparently begun to flourish; in the third, the failure of the seed at last, was likewise a necessary effect, but not until it was far advanced in its progress, and on the point of attaining to the perfection of its growth. In other words, from the nature of these several positions themselves, the seed on the shallow ground would live longer than that on the way side; and the seed among the thorns, than that on the shallow ground.

We may likewise observe, that though the seed which fell on the good ground, must both have been able to take root from the first, and free from the obstruction of thorns from the first, it would have

to contend with the heat of the sun, and however different in its different parts the virtue of the soil might be, yet it must every where have been adequate to resist the external evil of drought, and from its internal resources, to supply the grain with moisture, sufficient for its maintenance in health and vigour, during the hottest season of the year.

THE MORAL.

The above considerations will, no doubt, suffice to explain the material circumstances of the parable. The next thing requisite, is the determination of their scope and import; in other words, the moral of the parable.

The class or division to which this first of the parables belongs, is placed beyond a question by the testimony of our Saviour; whose interpretation of it, which we have on record, shews it to contain an allegory. In fact, had he vouchsafed no explanation of it, but left it exactly as he delivered it, the very nature of the parable itself would have sufficed to prove that it could not, without an absurdity, be supposed to contain no meaning beyond itself; to have no other object than merely to lay before the hearers an agreeable picture, which might please or amuse the imagination; but nothing more.

It is peculiar to this parable, and to most of those which were delivered on the same occasion, that probable or real as they may appear, they are derived from inanimate and external nature; they are made up of particulars more of a physical, than of a moral and practical kind; they describe a natural process, carried on by natural causes, and directed to a natural result; they are not taken from the

experience of human nature, under such and such circumstances of action ; they involve no suppositions about the conduct of moral agents, as placed in corresponding situations. No doubt the sower, in the present parable, is an human agent. But his personal character and agency are determined by his relation to the seed ; and that is a natural or inanimate object.

Under these circumstances, it would be to misapprehend the parable, to suppose it designed for moral instruction ; or to contain a moral example, illustrating and enforcing some practical point : not merely because no such practical inference is founded upon it, but because, as we shewed on a former occasion, every such example ought to be the same in kind, as the case in illustration of which it is adduced. It should not turn on a fictitious and imaginary, but on a real resemblance between the things compared, if like is to be exemplified and confirmed by like. The fabulist, whose end is to please, as much as to instruct, may disregard this rule ; but the severity of a serious morality must be more attentive to the reason of things, and to the decorum of truth and character. To suppose the present parable a moral example would make it an exception to this general rule ; and from the simplicity of an evangelical parabolic history, would degrade it to the artificial level of an apologue of antiquity.

If we refer to the particulars of our Lord's exposition of the parable, as we stated them in the General Introduction^h, we shall immediately conclude that it relates to some preaching of the word ; and that its

^h Vide chapter xi.

moral or import is to be found in the success and results of that preaching. The particular instance of this preaching, however; the particular description of the preacher, it would be evident, are left indefinite. The office ascribed to the sower, and his personal relation to the seed, are plainly specified; but who it is by whom this office is discharged, and to whom that relation is applicable, does not appear, even from the interpretation.

Now the personal relation of a sower, and the personal office of sowing or distributing seed, might agree to the character and agency of any one, whose preaching could be called a preaching of the word of God; that is, of any one, duly commissioned to be a minister of the gospel. Such were the apostles of our Saviour; and such, it may be presumed, was our Saviour himself. And therefore there may be room for controversy whether the moral of the parable relates to the success of the personal preaching and personal ministry of our Lord himself, or to that of the preaching and ministry of his apostles. The solution of this question seems to be necessary, before we can proceed to consider the moral, or subjoin the interpretation of the parable: but as its discussion would detain us too long at present, I have judged it best to refer the reader for it, to the Appendix. It is sufficient for our purpose here, to state the result of that discussion, which is this; that the descriptive appellation of the sower, who distributes the seed, is intended of no individual person, but of any apostle or minister of the gospel; and the seed, by consequence, of the word or gospel committed to his dispensation: whence we may infer that the action or history in the parable,

is applicable to that state of things only, when Christianity should have begun to be formally promulgated.

The moral of a parable like this, then, whose material circumstances are clearly directed to this one point, of shewing, among the various situations in which the same seed happened to fall, where it was likely to survive, and where to be lost, from the first; where, to survive only for a time, and where, to endure to maturity—with the appropriate causes to which each of these results should be due—can be nothing but this corresponding, though future fact, in the history of the dispensation of the gospel: among the various classes of persons, addressed by the same preaching of the apostles, as ministers of the gospel, who should embrace, and who should reject the word; who should embrace and retain it only for a time, and who should embrace and retain it to the end; with the causes to which this difference in their conduct, under circumstances apparently the same, should be due.

The parable is consequently an allegory, which describes beforehand the success of the *first* preaching of the gospel, by the proper emissaries of Christianity; and therefore it is to be restricted neither to their ministry among the Jews, nor to that among the Gentiles, since it is equally applicable to both. Its first application, indeed, would be to the success of their ministry among the Jews, because the preaching of the gospel was first to be addressed to the Jews; and there are some circumstances of the history, as we shall see by and by, which are principally referable to the Jews. It is therefore a concealed prophecy, or future history,

which had not yet been realized by the event, but would speedily begin to be so, and would always continue to be verified and confirmed by the fact, if the sowing of the seed, that is, the dissemination of the gospel, once begun among the Jews, were never after to be intermitted, but to extend in due time, over all parts of the world. To consider it then in the most general point of view; we may regard it as relating entirely to the *first* formation, but not to the *final* constitution, of the existing Christian church; subject to which point of view, must the interpretation of its material circumstances be attempted.

THE INTERPRETATION.

It is not necessary that the interpretation of this, or any other parable, should follow exactly the order in which its circumstances have previously been considered; and not be at liberty to take them in any other, that may just as well illustrate their scope and meaning. To begin then with the explanation of the present parable.

First, the scene of the labours of the sower, that is, the locality which was to receive the seed, did not denote a single field, but the extent and surface of a large estate. The scene of the labours of the ministers of Christianity, when they entered upon their work of disseminating the gospel, was not any one community, but in due course of time extended to all the earth.

The seed committed to the ground was every where the same, and the instrumental agency by which it was sown, was every where the same. The gospel, as preached by its proper ministers, wheresoever they came, was one and the same; and

the ministerial character of its preachers, whatsoever personal distinctions there might be among them, from the apostle to the simple evangelist, was just the same.

The end proposed by committing the seed to the ground, was not that any part of it should perish, or be unfruitful, but that all, if possible, should survive and become productive. The final end of preaching the gospel was not that the word of salvation should be rejected any where, or fail of its effect in converting the hearers, but that Christian societies should be planted, and take root and flourish every where.

The dispersion of the seed was indiscriminate; and the offer of the gospel, wheresoever it was preached, was made without distinction to all. The indiscriminate dispersion of the seed caused part to alight in one situation, and part in another; and the indiscriminate offer of the gospel to all mankind was the reason that persons of all tempers, and all moral qualifications indifferently, were addressed by the overture.

The success or failure of the seed was due to no superior excellence of that part which fell upon one situation, nor to any comparative badness of that which fell upon another; but simply to the nature and circumstances of the situation. The reception or rejection of the gospel, which was every where the same in itself, and every where similarly preached and proposed by its proper ministers, could not be due either to the gospel which was preached, or to the mode in which it was preached; but simply to the characters and dispositions of the hearers to whom it was preached.

Of the various circumstances of position under which the seed, before its distribution, was liable to fall, some were beforehand more favourable to its security and growth; and some were less so: and of the various characters and dispositions in every community, addressed by the preaching of the gospel, the habits and tempers of some would prepare them for its reception, and those of others would predispose them to its rejection. It was a quality of the situation which, in each instance, determined the after-fortune of the seed; and it was a quality of the heart and mind which, in every instance of the persons addressed by the word of God, produced its success or its failure with them.

The seed, it is true, possessed its own virtue as well as the soil; and so did the word of God its own quality, as well as the hearers. But the natural virtue of the seed could neither be exerted nor seen, under the circumstances of an untoward position; its intrinsic vigour and fertility appeared only where the advantages of the situation cooperated with the goodness of the grain. The preaching of the gospel could exert no physical violence; only a moral force and constraint on its hearers. Against their own wills and inclinations it could never succeed; its native excellency and recommendations, which with persons of a congenial disposition would almost instinctively suffice to the production of a genuine lively faith, would be thrown away and lost on hearers of a contrary frame of mind.

A greater variety of situations on which, before its dissemination, the seed was liable to fall, nor consequently a greater variety of results, as the grain alighted on one of those positions or another, than

what the parable supposed, could not well have been imagined to attend on one and the same process of sowing, or to discriminate the subsequent fortunes of one and the same seed. Nor, perhaps, can we conceive a more comprehensive distribution of personal characters, corresponding to those situations; nor a more complete enumeration of personal motives, answering to the properties or affections of the ground; nor a more natural and probable anticipation of the result of the offer of the gospel to hearers of these several kinds, and actuated by motives so different and yet so appropriate, than what would be supplied as the counterpart in every instance, by the consequences of such a fact as the preaching and promulgation of the same word of God, among all kinds and descriptions of human agents.

As those situations were four in number, the moral or personal distinctions of character, which answer to them, will also be fourfold. In other words, as there were four, but only four, different positions, on which the seed was liable to fall, there will be four, but only four, distinct classes of hearers, to one or other of whom, when the word of God came to be generally preached, it can be considered as necessarily or probably to be addressed. All those situations agreed in being recipients of a common seed; and all kinds and descriptions of hearers would so far resemble each other, as to be addressed alike by the offer of the gospel. And as the difference in the properties of the site appeared only in the difference of the result to the seed; so would the moral distinctions of character in the hearers be

evidenced only by their conduct as such, in rejecting or embracing the offer of the gospel.

If we compare these four situations together, the first and most general distinction between them, we perceive, is this; in one of the number, the seed was liable to perish immediately—in each of the rest, it might survive at least for a time. It could not even take root in the ground on the wayside; but it might vegetate and flourish a while, both on the rock and in the midst of the thorns, as well as on the good soil. In like manner, when the gospel should come to be preached to the world; if it cannot be shewn that it must convert either *all* its hearers, or *none* of them; there would necessarily be some by whom it would be rejected, and others by whom it would be received: if it cannot be shewn, that those whom it did convert, it must convert *totally*, and not possibly only imperfectly and in part, there would be some among its hearers who would receive it *entirely*, and others who would receive it *in part*. Of such hearers as those of the first description, by whom the very offer of the gospel should be rejected, *in toto*, as soon as made, there could not, in the nature of things, be more than one class; no more, than more situations than one, in which the seed, as soon as it alighted there, would be exposed to certain, immediate destruction from any such cause as inability to penetrate the ground.

If we compare the remaining situations together, though in each of them, as opposed to the first, the seed was capable of surviving for a time, yet in two of them, as opposed to the third, it was not capable of surviving to the end, and maturing its fruit; it

might possibly flourish for a certain time, but it must die away and perish at last. In like manner, though all who did not *at once* reject, must so far receive the gospel, yet if they did not receive it *totally*, they would receive it only *in part*; if they received it only *in part*, they might possibly not persevere in it; they might embrace and profess it for a time, but abandon it altogether at last. As there would be some of the hearers of the gospel, then, with whom its preaching would fail of success from the first, and others with whom it would not; so, even among those with whom it succeeded, with some it might succeed *in toto*, with others only *in part*: by some, consequently, it might be retained ever after, and by others, sooner or later, it must be given up and lost.

If we compare the two first of these three situations together, though the seed was liable to perish, before it could even spring up, in one situation only, and though it was capable of surviving and flourishing to the end, only in one situation also; yet it was evidently capable of surviving and growing for a time, in more situations than one; and consequently its destruction at last might be due to more obstructing causes than one. The cause which was likely to produce its final destruction, in each of these instances, could not be the same, unless the situation itself, upon which it acted, or out of which its activity proceeded, was the same likewise. The cause, which produced the loss of the seed on the shallow ground, was the heat of the sun from without, and the defect of moisture from within; and that which produced it among the thorns, was the rankness and thickness of the thorns, growing along

with the seed, and excluding it from air and light. The peculiar danger of the seed, in the former situation, was due in part to the *exposedness* of its position; and that of the seed, in the latter, to its *concealedness*: situations, so far the reverse of each other, and though obnoxious to a common evil, affecting the security and existence of the plant, yet in the causes which must produce it, and bring about the destruction of vegetable life, obviously opposed to each other.

In like manner, as there might be some among the hearers addressed by the gospel, who would neither totally receive, nor totally reject it at first, and so far would agree together; and as all, who did not totally receive it at once, however long they might partially retain it, were liable to reject it altogether at last; yet as they might embrace it at first, so they might relinquish it at last, from the influence of different causes, and so far be distinct. Some might be brought to this by the operation of causes, analogous to the evil which wrought the destruction of the seed, on the shallow ground; others, by the influence of such as answered to the reasons of the loss of the seed among the thorns. And as the evils, peculiar to these two situations in particular, were not only the most natural, under the circumstances of the case, but also the most opposite to, and distinct from each other; so the kinds of hearers, who must answer to those situations, and be exposed to the influence of causes, affecting if not the reception, yet the maintenance and preservation of their gospel profession, analogous to the evils which endangered the maturity of the seed in each of those positions respectively, will constitute not only two

classes, but two classes, strongly discriminated asunder.

Lastly, with respect to the fourth situation, as opposed to all the preceding, it was a situation in which the seed was capable of falling and vegetating and gradually proceeding to maturity; and consequently, whatever possible differences there might ultimately be in the magnitude of the crop, it must so far be one and the same. There could not, in the nature of things, be more than one situation as such, in which the seed would be capable of surviving to maturity, that is, would be safe and secure to the last—any more than where it would be incapable of surviving at all; that is, would perish from the first and be lost. And it must be equally evident, that among all the hearers of the gospel, they, who should not merely not reject, but receive it, *in toto*, at first, and not merely receive, but retain and persevere in it, to the end; must so far agree together, and so far constitute one class, distinct from all others besides. There could not, in the nature of things, be more than one class, and therefore than one comprehensive assortment, of persons, addressed by the gospel, who agreed in this common respect, that they all accepted it at first, and all retained it to the last; any more than of those, who, under the same circumstances, agreed in the opposite but common respect, of rejecting it, without acceptance, even from the first.

As, then, it appeared from the parable that the different situations upon which the seed, before its distribution, was liable to fall, and on some one of which, in the act of sowing, it must necessarily fall,

were four in number, but no more; so does it appear from reasons of necessity, *a priori*, that the various classes of hearers, unto whom the word of God was every where to be preached, if judged of by these two criteria, of rejecting or receiving the word *at first*; of receiving and retaining it *for a time*, or of receiving and retaining it *to the end*; would be four in number, also, but not more. To illustrate and explain this coincidence still more clearly, let us proceed to contrast the physical cause, which produced the difference in the fortunes of the seed, according to the peculiar circumstances of its position in the ground, with the moral cause, which is supposed to determine the success or failure of the preaching of the gospel, according to the particular description of hearers, to which it happened to be addressed.

The physical cause, which accounts for the failure of the seed in the first situation, was the hardness of the ground; a necessary property of a beaten and trodden surface. Into a surface so trampled, it would be impossible for the seed which fell there, so much as to strike its roots. The moral cause, therefore, which is capable of answering to a physical circumstance of this sort, must be an absolute hardness of heart or obduracy, in the hearers; a confirmed insensibility to all good impressions. Of such dispositions, it is with reason observed in the exposition of the parable, according to St. Matthew, that "they hear the word of the kingdom, but do not admit it," rather than "*comprehend or understand it*;" (for so, the verb *συνίεναι*, here employed, may be construed;) their very callousness rendering it as im-

possible that the word should take root in their hearts, as the hardness of a beaten surface that seed should penetrate there into the ground. They are too stubborn and obdurate to be softened, without a miracle, even by the grace of God, and the mollifying influences of his Spirit, which, under ordinary circumstances, accompany, enforce, and invigorate the preaching of his word, to the personal conviction, the immediate impression, and the permanent assurance and satisfaction of its hearers; just as the wayside of fields is impenetrable to the dews and rains, which, in other instances, soften and prepare the ground for the reception of the seed, before it is sown, and foster and nourish it, when grown.

This state of the mind, and of the moral sense, may be the most deplorable to which human frailty is exposed, and the most horrible to which human wickedness is liable to be reduced; yet it is presupposed by the parable as a possible state; and it is recognised by other parts of scripture, as no unexampled phenomenon in the moral world. It may be the last stage in a long career of depravity, and the judicial result of perseverance in obstinate wickedness with impunity and impenitence; yet even as such, instances of it are still to be met with, in our own experience of the world; and if we consider the great immorality of the times just when the gospel began to be promulgated—what vices were then prevalent, how unnatural in kind, how enormous in degree, how general and indiscriminate in practice—this extreme point of moral degradation, this species or variety of character, so far gone from the possible purity and perfection even of human virtue,

so much beyond the ordinary degree even of human wickedness, might be no rare occurrenceⁱ.

ⁱ Though the doctrine of original sin was not known to the philosophers of old, yet the consequences of it, in the natural inclination to evil, which characterizes all mankind, were too obvious to escape their penetration; and especially that of Aristotle. It is true, he thought it in the power of long and systematic habit to correct this tendency, and by dint of perseverance in a line of conduct, the reverse of natural inclinations, to create a tendency of an opposite description, and to make right action, under all circumstances, as agreeable to our predilections, as it is consonant to our reason.

Whether it is in the power of habit to correct the original tendencies of human nature, and to make men as it were anew, or not; it must be in its power greatly to increase or confirm them. A man who is born with an hereditary disposition to a certain malady, will never succeed in eradicating the seeds of it from his system: the utmost that his care and circumspection can effect will be, perhaps, to suspend, retard, or procrastinate their action upon it. But the least indiscretion on his own part may at any time give premature life and activity to the principle of disease, within him; which would otherwise have slumbered awhile, apparently innocent and harmless.

If men are not necessarily determined to evil by the law of their nature, yet they are strongly inclined to it; and a body which is already overbalanced may easily be made to fall. It required great labour, and huge exertions of strength, to roll the stone of Sisyphus to the top of his hill; nothing but the fatal *revolubility* of the stone itself, to make it recoil, and roll back again.

The proper field for the influence of habit, and the trial of what it is able to effect, is a state of neutrality or indifference, with a preference or inclination neither of one kind, nor of another. It would not follow then, that we should be already rendered virtuous, because we had ceased to be vicious; or that we had got a predilection for right action, because we had been relieved of a partiality to wrong. It is one thing to straighten

Now, as seed, which lay exposed on an hard, impenetrable surface, would necessarily be liable to be

a crooked stick ; and another to give it a bend in the opposite direction.

If habit can do any thing in making men, compared with what they are naturally, better, surely it must be able to do much more in making them worse. It has nature to oppose and thwart it, in rendering them better ; but to second and facilitate it, in making them worse. Its work is more than half done, before it is begun, in the latter instance ; it is not yet in circumstances even to be commenced, in the former.

Revelation has taught us that if mankind, though degenerated from their original purity and uprightness, are yet not totally depraved ; and like the fallen angels, who once were pure and perfect as man in his original state of righteousness, are not now as essentially evil as they before were good ; it is because the Spirit of God, with its preventive and cooperating aids and influences, has never been entirely withdrawn from the human part of the rational creation, in consequence of *their* transgression ; as it was from the angelical, in consequence of *theirs*.

If then, any traces of an original moral excellence have been perceptible in the natural constitution of mankind, since the fall ; if any, whether Gentile or Jew, whether before the birth of Christ, or since, have been conscious of any thing of good, within themselves ; have been capable of any thing of good, or given proofs of any thing of good—if the truth must be spoken, however humbling to the pride of our own hearts—the praise of all, the efficient cause of all, must be attributed as much to the continued presence and assistance of the Spirit of grace and goodness, which has never altogether forsaken the posterity of Adam, nor ever ceased to work upon them, and with them, before the birth of Christ any more than since—as to themselves.

But the Spirit of God, in its action upon individuals, may be *resisted*, may be *grieved*, may be *quenched* : and when this is the case, to what must the heart of man be exposed, without a counteracting influence, but to the unrestrained, the uncontrolled, and the irresistible impulse of natural lusts and passions ?

When the Supreme Being pronounced those words, Gen. vi.3.

crushed by the foot, or devoured by birds; so the word lying inactive in the hearts of such men, as

which it appears from 1 Pet. iii. 20. sealed the doom of the antediluvian world, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh:" His grace from that moment was withdrawn, and men were left, without their spiritual guardian, ally, and protector any longer, to "the imagination of their own hearts, which are only evil continually," (vi. 5:) to the dominion of their own wickedness, and to its penal consequences, when the term appointed for its intermediate toleration should be expired.

Read the catalogue of crimes and vices, prevailing in the Gentile world more particularly, just at the time of the birth of the gospel; which is given in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. What must have been the moral complexion of such a state of things: or what could there be of moral life and health in a body so foully infected with the leprosy of sin; and where almost the whole of the civilized world seemed to have been abandoned to a *reprobate* mind, to an understanding that could no longer discriminate between good and evil, between right and wrong; to glory in their shame; to work all uncleanness with greediness; to wallow in all kinds of sensuality, and to commit every outrage on nature and decency, without a blush, without compunction, and without remorse?

Who were those apostates from grace, and from their former standing, of whom St. Peter speaks, that it had happened to them, according to the true proverb—"The dog *was* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire?" (2 Pet. ii. 22.) Or what description of character, what state of the mind and the moral sense, are meant by St. Paul, when he talks of "having the conscience seared with a hot iron?" (1 Tim. iv. 2.)

Confirmed and perfect vice, as Aristotle repeatedly observes, could it be realized in any subject, would be a stranger to its own depravity, and insensible to its own situation. It is while on the road to this ultimate consummation of his condition, that the wicked man is made to feel, from his own experience, that he is not yet totally lost. The painful struggle between their worse and their better inclinations, which goes on for a time

finding no congenial sympathy in their thoughts, their feelings, their habits or predispositions, on even in such minds; the warnings of conscience which are raised, even under such circumstances, against the meditated commission of evil; the anguish of remorse, and the upbraidings of guilt themselves, are so many proofs even to these persons, that their case is not yet hopeless; that the *man* is not yet become a *devil*.

While there is a particle of vitality or soundness still left in a member of the body, which has begun to mortify, the sensibility is morbidly excited; and the pain is most acute and intolerable: when life is extinguished in the diseased part, the pain is at an end, but death is close at hand.

“If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness:” Matt. vi. 23. Is the light, here spoken of, the light within the man, the natural faculty of the reason and understanding; which the language of all moralists compares to the light, and which the wise man calls the “candle of the Lord,” lighted up within us? If so, this light may become darkness; and that darkness may be total. The faculty of seeing by the natural light of the understanding, and of being directed aright in the choice between good and evil, may be lost; but it will be lost, by being depraved, not destroyed; by becoming enslaved to darkness, and as necessarily mistaking evil for good, and as necessarily liking and approving of evil, as in its sound and unvitiated state, it would have done of good.

Such a corruption of the natural light of reason and conscience, and its baneful effects on the life and conversation of the man, seem to be what is meant by that quality of *folly* or *ἀφροσύνη*, which our Saviour enumerates, Mark vii. 22. among the other evil things which “come out of the man and defile him;” that is, proceed from himself; and for which he is consequently responsible. Folly, in the ordinary sense of the term, would seem to be synonymous with fatuity; and so far from implying a crime in the subject of it, to be rather his misfortune than his fault, and more to be pitied than reproached. But, folly, as *ἀφροσύνη*—the opposite moral quality to prudence (*φρόνησις*), the perfection of practical wisdom, is the climax of a reprobate mind.

“Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your

which to begin to work, and so by degrees insinuate itself, in order to take root and be cherished to an

“ pearls before the swine:” Matt. vii. 6. Are certain personal distinctions of character denoted by these two terms? and if so, is not the one the brutal and ferocious, the other the gross and licentious? On either of these, the holy things and pearls of the gospel would be cast away; on the one, as too savage and inhuman, and on the other, as too impure and sensual, to sympathise with the nature of such a gift, to recognise its value, and to profit by its acceptance.

The licentious exhibitions of the theatres and amphitheatres of the Gentile world; the impure rites, consecrated by the name of religion; the immoral tendency of the writings of the ancients; the indecencies of private life; the obscenities which abounded in their dining rooms, their bedrooms, and in every corner of their domestic retirement; the stews and brothels of their towns and cities; the vile, but universal, practice of pæderasty; were well qualified to make *swine* of men: and the sanguinary inhuman shows of gladiators, the favourite passion of all ranks of society; and the unnatural practice of infanticide, or the exposure of their newborn children, so general likewise; were just as much calculated to make *brutes* and savages of them, and in fact, worse than dogs and beasts of prey. For wild beast feeds not on wild beast,

Parcit

Cognatis maculis similis fera.

JUVENAL, xv. 159.

much less tears its own species to pieces, for its amusement and diversion: and no animal so ferocious and irreclaimable, but what has the affections of a parent, and is mild and gentle towards its young: which could not be said of thousands (nay perhaps millions) of Roman and Grecian fathers and mothers, at the time of the first propagation of the gospel.

The drift of these observations is to render it probable that the obdurate, impenitent, character is at all times a possible one, and was especially so, at the particular juncture when Christianity first made its appearance, and entered on the task of regenerating the world. Even on the day of Pentecost, persons were found to scoff at that wonderful display of the agency of the Spirit, and to say of those, who were singing and praising

happy maturity, but on the contrary, an invincible repugnance and antipathy between itself and them—it is such tempers as these, of which the enemy of God and man, who is always intent upon the subversion of human souls, and ever on the alert to frustrate the efforts of divine benevolence in their behalf, is ready to take instant advantage, and to confirm them still more in their fatal obduracy and unbelief. Could the seed lie long enough on the wayside, peradventure it might in the end take root even in beaten ground; and could the word of grace only be left unmolested in the bosoms even of the most impenitent, peradventure it might at last soften the heart of stone. But the author of evil, who considers such hearts his peculiar property, will not suffer the word of grace to remain in undisturbed possession of them, until it works its natural effect; or rather, in the language of our Lord's exposition of this part of the parable, he is ever at hand, and ever on the watch to *snatch away* the word from

God with new tongues; "These men are full of new wine." The conduct of the Pharisees towards our Saviour, through the whole course of his ministry, is a good example of a moral insensibility, impenetrable to all right impressions, and obstinately steeled against conviction. And describing the wickedness of the zealots in his own time, (men, who carried the principles of these Pharisees to their utmost extent,) Josephus has not language sufficiently expressive, to characterize and stigmatize it, as it deserved; and at length sums up his account of it by saying that in one word, the earth had never produced, nor could possibly have sustained any longer, so abominable a race; and had not God quickly cut them off by the swords of the Romans, some new thing must have been done to get rid of them—the earth must have opened her mouth to swallow them up, or the fires of Sodom must have again rained to consume them.

such hearts, before it has time so much as to touch or influence them: which being done, it is clearly implied, and it must be self-evident, that the condition of these hearers, abandoned by grace, and deprived of the means of conversion, which they have scorned and neglected, while in their power, is more naked and destitute, more reckless and insensate, yet infinitely more hopeless and dangerous than before.

The physical cause which gave occasion to the ultimate destruction of the seed on the rocky ground, was the defect of moisture in the soil within, to sustain the plant against the heat and drought from without. Yet the seed began to vegetate in that situation, and grew luxuriantly for a time; viz. until the year was advancing to the harvest, and the sun had become too powerful. The same quality of the site, too, which made the plants growing upon it, speedily succumb to the heat of the weather, made them as speedily appear above ground. They soon sprung up, and as soon died away; both, because they had no depth of earth, either to bury them when sown, or to feed and nourish them when sprung up.

The moral cause which must answer to such a physical one as this, in producing, with a certain class of hearers, if not the original rejection, yet the ultimate renunciation and loss of their gospel profession, may be expressed in one word by *defect of principle*. But it is a defect of principle in the hearers, founded in an ignorance and misapprehension of the gospel overture, addressed to them. The hearers of this class, saith our Lord, “receive the word with joy,” as soon as they have heard

it; there must be something therefore, in the external appearance of what they have heard, agreeable to their apprehensions, and calculated to fall in with their likings and expectations. "In time of temptation," that is, of *trial*, "forthwith they take offence, and fall away;" they find something in the word, then, by experience, very different from their first impressions, and very contrary to what they had expected. It might well be said, therefore, that they "are only for a season," and under certain circumstances are liable to fall away; and both, because they have no root in themselves; they have no ground of support, confirmation, or reliance from within, of which the pressure of external circumstances, the threats and intimidation of danger from without, never can deprive them. They labour under the deficiency of a true Christian principle.

Believers of this description, we may presume, would be principally they, who should embrace the gospel, on its first publication, with a mistaken idea of the nature and consequences of their Christian vocation; of what the profession of the gospel would require from themselves, and of what they should be exposed to by it, chiefly with reference to their external circumstances—their ease, their comfort, their peace and security, in person or fortune—in the present life. The reception and profession of the Christian religion must have appeared to such persons, a safe and an easy thing, at least, beforehand; if tribulation and persecution for the word's sake, coming afterwards to be experienced, and found to be necessary to their continuance in the choice they have made, are so unexpected and startling, so harsh and unpalatable, that rather than submit to them

with patience and resignation, they prefer to apostatize from their faith itself, and to give up their interest in a religion hereafter, which is so full of trouble and discomfort, of risk and difficulty, in the present life.

Nor is it very improbable, that with hearers of this description, the profession of Christianity so far from being regarded as the forerunner of suffering and distress in the present life, might be considered a possible avenue to temporal wealth, prosperity, and distinction. Among the Jews, at least, numbers might still look upon the kingdom of Christ, when it came to be openly established by the foundation of his church as such, with the old, national prejudice of a temporal or carnal kingdom, shortly to be expected: and until undeceived by the event, numbers among them might be anxious to crowd into it, with the hope of partaking in the immediate benefits of such a kingdom.

In any case, whatsoever converts, answering to the second description of the hearers in the parable, embraced the gospel at first, with a knowledge and presentiment of the personal sacrifices which would be required of them by it, in attestation of their faith and sincerity—their renouncing it afterwards, in the time of trial, would argue a want of firmness and constancy: and whosoever embraced it without that knowledge, and because they believed it to be a very different thing from what they discovered it, at last, to be—such an ignorance would argue the want of a right understanding of their gospel vocation, and of a genuine Christian spirit: and in either case, the root of the evil at bottom, would still be the defect of principle.

Converts of this last description, were likely to be most numerous at the outset of the gospel dispensation; before the course of time and of events had fully assured every existing and every future Christian, how much his actual or his intended profession was likely to cost to his personal ease and safety. Very many might once have embraced the gospel, before its true spiritual nature was distinctly understood, as a scheme of probation, one main article of which is the discipline of trial and suffering, and one principal doctrine, that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God; or before, in fact, there appeared, or was reason to imagine, any danger in its profession—who might not be disposed to make the sacrifices required in its behalf, or prepared to encounter the difficulties to which they would find themselves exposed by it, at last. The order of the event in the preaching and reception of the gospel, both among the Jews and the Gentiles, seems to have been this; that for a time after its establishment in a particular community, its profession was safe and unmolested, and entailed no sacrifice of temporal comfort or personal security, in order to its being retained by those who had once embraced it. It was seven years, after the ascension, before the first storm of persecution, beginning with the death of Stephen, burst on the first or Jewish church; and it was thirty-four, before the secular arm was raised, on a large scale of violence, out of Judæa, to arrest the progress of the gospel, and Christianity began to be persecuted by the Roman government. To converts of lukewarm faith, persecution for the word's sake, would be the most searching and terrible of trials,

and the least likely to be successfully encountered.

Nor is it necessary to suppose that all the nominal professors of Christianity, in a time of general peace and tranquillity, who would always have continued to profess it, had the same peace and security never been molested, yet nevertheless fell away in seasons of difficulty, distress, and danger, embraced their profession originally under an ignorance of what they would probably be exposed to by it. Ecclesiastical history is full of the instances of those, who lapsed in times of persecution, yet must have been converted to Christianity with a well-grounded assurance, judging from the experience of the past, that no personal safety, no personal ease or comfort, could reasonably be looked for by the followers of Jesus Christ in this life; who must have embraced their profession therefore, from deliberate choice, with their minds made up to endure any personal burden or personal sacrifice in the way of probation, that might be imposed upon them; and a confidence in their own strength, that they should not be found wanting in the hour of trial.

The seed which fell on the shallow ground was exposed to the heat and drought, but it did not grow among thorns; and had the nature of its position secured it against the danger of being dried up at last through the former of those causes, it would not have been choked by the latter. It is not impossible that even men, whose hearts would be otherwise wholly devoted to God, and in the ordinary career of their Christian profession, would go on to make their calling and election sure, may yet give way, and endanger their salvation, under circumstances

of extreme and unusual trial^k. The strongest support, if overloaded, will bend or break; the firmest faith, if based on the passive energies of mere human endurance, may yield to external pressure; may be intimidated into weakness by sudden alarms, or forcibly borne down by overpowering violence. Judas fell; St. Peter was surprised into the denial of his Master, whom he loved in truth and simplicity all the while; St. Paul considered it possible, that when he had preached to others, he might himself be a castaway; and in various parts of their Epistles, neither he nor St. Peter, think it unnecessary to fortify and secure their converts, (of whose faith and sincerity at the time there is not the least reason to doubt,) by every argument which can influence the hopes or fears of men, against the possible danger of lapsing, and apostatizing from the faith, which they had once embraced, under the urgency of that antagonist power from without, to which they were either exposed already, or liable at any time to be so.

The physical cause of the failure of the seed, in the third instance, was the obstruction to its growth and arrival at maturity, which proceeded from the thorns; an obstruction produced by their overhanging and shading, and at last, stifling and suffocating the sprouts and stalks of the plant, as neither able

^k When Pliny the younger was carrying on his inquisition against the Christians in Bithynia, a vast multitude (*ingens multitudo*) were brought before him, who, it appeared, had once been Christians, some a longer, others a shorter time, previously; but had afterwards renounced their profession: no doubt either in consequence of that persecution, or of some other, like it, before. Plin. Epp. lib. x. xcvi.

to penetrate through their texture, nor yet to enjoy underneath it the natural aids of the air and the sun. A moral cause of the failure of the gospel overture, with the proper description of hearers, that could answer to an impediment like this, would be something which produced its effect within them, by thwarting, perplexing, and gradually destroying the growth and influence of a vital Christianity.

The nature of such an impediment is expressed in general by the following classification of moral motives; “the cares of this world, the deceit of riches, and the desires *which concern* the rest of things:” which last the account of St. Luke shews to be equivalent to the “pleasures of life” in general. The class of hearers to whom the influence of such motives is applicable, may be described, in one word, as the *worldly minded* of every sort; by whom, however, I understand all, who, though they may receive and nominally profess the gospel, do not in practice attend to its great and monopolizing importance, nor wholly give themselves up to its influence—all, in whose hearts the seed, or word of God, is not unable to take root, but to thrive there, and bring forth fruit—as not having the heart to itself, but being entertained in conjunction with other things, in the society of which it cannot subsist and prosper, until it arrives at maturity; its freedom of action is fettered and restrained; its natural health and vigour are gradually impaired and stifled.

This description will comprise all, whose minds, though partially affected by the love of God, are never wholly devoted to him; though sensible of the value, necessity, and importance of religious

duties, are never entirely fixed upon the prospects of another life; but are divided between God and the world, and hang as it were between heaven and earth, neither altogether forgetful of their spiritual interests, nor altogether mindful of them; labouring, perhaps, for a while to reconcile the duties of religion and the concerns of eternity, with the business of life and the objects of time and sense; distracted by opposite inclinations and pursuits; combining, or endeavouring to combine, the service of God with the worship of some favourite idol of their own creation: until at last the love of the world, in which they live, gains the ascendant over them, and by the superior force of its attractions, absorbs their affections, engrosses their thoughts, engages their time and attention, and immerses them totally in secular pursuits and employments.

Each of the above motives, however, may be considered applicable to a distinct class of persons. The cares of this world will apply to the case of men, more particularly, who are of an aspiring or ambitious turn of mind; whose ruling passion is the desire of power and influence, of rank and authority, among their contemporaries; who mix eagerly in active life; manage, or aim at managing, the affairs of societies; grasp at honours and distinctions, as the reward of civil merit; lay the foundation of families and titles. The deceit, or deceivable tendencies of wealth, will apply, in an especial manner, to the men of business, and of trading or commercial enterprise; to all, whose object or employment it is, in any way to amass wealth, to provide for families, to accumulate and leave behind them, fortunes. The desires which concern the rest of things,

as we may collect from St. Luke's exposition of their nature, point sufficiently clearly to another comprehensive division of mankind, the votaries of pleasure; who think of nothing, and live for little or nothing, but their own gratification and indulgence. Under this description will be comprehended, not only the mere sensualist or man of fashion; but even the men of science and letters; the admirers and cultivators of the elegant arts or accomplishments. For personal pleasure and gratification may be intellectual as well as bodily; and only a more refined species of the love of self and sense in general. The desires which turn upon every object of human attachment and human pursuit, distinct only from wealth as such, and the subject matter of the *μέριμναι τοῦ αἰῶνος*, or "cares of the world," must be of a very general description; and will extend to every thing that men can propose or seek after, as the main business, concern, or employment of life, independent of mere and simple utility. And what is this, but some one or other of the manifold shapes and varieties, under which the same common property of apparent good, presents itself in the form of the pleasant? Whatever be the idol of a man's heart, distinct from power or wealth, it is still some favourite creature of his own choice and selection; and in worshipping and devoting himself to it, he is still studying his own pleasure and gratification. If the philosopher, or the scholar—if the patron of science, or the admirer of letters and of the fine arts; if the artist himself, and the candidate for literary or scientific distinction, do not come under the description of such as are influenced by the first or the second class of motives, they find a place

among those who are affected by the third: and if these persons too have no other purpose in their favourite study, their exclusive object of pursuit, but what is purely selfish and secular; finding both its beginning and its consummation within the limits of this present life, and going no further than their personal satisfaction, amusement, reputation, or comfort—they too must be classed with the rest in whose hearts the seed has been stifled, or is liable to be stifled, in its progress to maturity, by the pleasures of life, and by the desires that concern the rest of things.

It is manifest that this classification of persons or characters, according to the influence of such different moral motives of action as these, will extend to the great bulk of mankind: and its completeness may be judged of by comparing it with a similar division of the world at large, which is made by Aristotle, one of the most accurate observers of human nature, who ever lived. He distributes mankind, every where; that is, mankind as living in civil society; into classes, according to the lives they lead from choice, principle, or profession; and lives into three sorts, the ἀπολαυστικὸς, (or sensual,) the πολιτικὸς, (or civil,) and the χρηματιστικὸς¹, (or commercial): the first of which answers to the third class of moral agents in our Saviour's classification, and the second and third to his first and second, respectively. It is a beauty too, in the order of our Saviour's classification, that the characters comprehended in each division are arranged in the scale of a comparative moral excellence; since, in the opinion of

¹ *Ethica*, i. 5.

all mankind, there is something more noble and dignified in the life and profession of agents of the first class, than in those of agents of the second ; and something more rational and elevated even in the character and conduct of agents of the second class, than in those of the members of the third, understood in its grossest and most obvious application, as comprehending the mere voluptuary, or man of pleasure. There is but one division of mankind, distinct from these three, which Aristotle adds to the number ; viz. the class of those, whom he supposes to lead from preference, the quiet, the silent, the contemplative life of the wise man or philosopher, intent on the perfecting of his intellectual nature by absorbing its affections, and concentrating its energies, on the noblest and worthiest objects of rational study and meditation : and to this we may well oppose our Saviour's fourth class of moral agents ; the humble and sincere professors of Christianity, or those who, as we shall presently see, receive the word in the honest and good heart, and bring forth its fruit to perfection.

It was observable in the parable that the seed which grew among the thorns, was finally stifled only when it was advancing to perfection ; and it must be self-evident that if religious influences are received into the heart at all, they will not all at once be rejected ; they will survive there, and grow for a time, whatever difficulties they may have to struggle against ; and however certain it may be, from the circumstances of the case, that they must ultimately be dispossessed, or cease to be active. A heart *divided* between God, and any object of time and self, is yet not *totally* engrossed by the latter ; and in

whatever proportion the heart and the affections are engaged by the love of God, to the same degree will the life and conversation also be influenced. One who is induced to think soberly, seriously, and earnestly, of the necessity, value, or dignity of his spiritual interests, is so far prepared to give them a deliberate preference above every other object of his choice or pursuit : and a sober, a serious, and earnest conviction, though not necessarily indelible, is still not easy to be effaced. First impressions, it is true, however lively, if they are not duly encouraged and strengthened, will naturally grow dead and insensible : and men whose hearts, however strongly inclined to God, are yet not wholly dedicated to him, nor altogether unimpressed by an idea of the importance of secular cares and pursuits, for their own sake, and as legitimate objects of affection, are always in danger of losing their sense of religion by too close a familiarity with the world, and too deep and engrossing an interest in the ordinary concerns of life. It is impossible to eradicate the seed from the *honest* and *good* heart, and it is hard to stifle it, even among the *thorns* ; but as its present security, and its ultimate arrival at perfection, are necessary consequences of the circumstances of its position in the one case, so is its immediate insecurity, at any time, and the certainty of its final destruction, before it can arrive at maturity, so long as the thorns among which it was received at first, continue to spring up and to grow with it afterwards, as necessarily the result of the nature of its situation in the other.

Yet the ground, which was preoccupied by thorns, or on which the thorns sprang up along with the

seed, might be, naturally, not the least fertile part of the field; and the very luxuriance and rankness of its produce were virtually a criterion of the intrinsic excellence of the soil. For the same natural goodness of the ground, which enabled the thorns to grow so vigorously, would no doubt have promoted the growth and maturity of the wheat, under the circumstances of an open situation, undivided with any thing else; and where weeds, or noxious herbs flourish most abundantly from the natural quality of the soil, an useful or nutritious verdure, if delivered from such impediments, would best thrive and flourish also. In like manner, there must be a natural goodness of disposition even in those who, though they may not act up to their gospel profession, or make the duties of religion the chief business of their lives, yet are so far impressed with a sense of their importance, as to think favourably and seriously of them. The ardour too, with which the worldly minded of every description enter upon and pursue their several callings, is a proof that they have warm and strong feelings at bottom; which require only a just and proper direction of their impulse, and an adequate object of their affection, to make them the one thing needful in the service of God, and in the work of human salvation. No one is cold, or lukewarm, or indifferent, in the pursuit of a favourite object of his own election, let its nature be what it may; and if men's religious sensibilities appear to be dead and sluggish, in comparison of the susceptibility which they are seen to display towards other things, the warmth with which they engage in their secular pursuits, the activity with which they prosecute the

employments of their own choice or creation—it is because they take so much more *personal* interest in the latter—they consider them so much more important and indispensable, on every account, than the former. With a different turn and direction of the affections, with new habits of thought, and other notions of the value of the various objects of desire or pursuit; the most worldly minded of men would be the best qualified for heavenly mindedness. That zeal and enthusiasm in a particular cause; that exclusive devotion to particular objects; that sacrifice of personal ease and comfort, if necessary to their attainment; that perseverance under all difficulties, and that elasticity and buoyancy of hope under all disappointments, which we may observe in a thousand instances around us, to characterise and sustain the candidate for temporal distinction, temporal enjoyment, temporal good and satisfaction of any kind—would form the most exemplary of saints, if exerted in a better cause; and would do more for the attainment of men's everlasting salvation, than they can possibly effect for the promotion of their welfare or happiness, in the present world.

But it is time that we should now consider, last of all, the physical cause which produces the success of the seed, in the only situation, where it is seen to succeed. And that, whatever differences there may be in the respective magnitudes of the crop, on the different parts of this one situation, is every where the same in kind; the natural virtue of the seed, and the natural goodness of the soil. The moral qualification in the hearer, which answers to this physical predisposition in the ground, our Saviour

has specified by the possession of the *honest* and *good* heart^m: a description, familiar to classical readers, as the received denomination among the Greeks for the idea of abstract moral excellence: and which, though we should not suppose it employed exactly in that sense, here, must still imply a simple, a teachable, and a virtuous disposition, in general.

With hearers of this description, the gospel would require no recommendation to make them receive and embrace it, but its intrinsic excellence and loveliness: no more than the seed, falling on a duly prepared soil, any stimulus to vegetation, but its native tendency to take root and spring up. Nor is it, perhaps, without design that St. Matthew adds to his description of such hearers, that "they hear the word, and give it admission," or "understand it," before they retain it: just as St. Luke adds, that "they retain," or "hold it fast," before they bring forth its fruit. For that comprehension of the nature of the gospel overture is just as necessary, and just as much prior, to its admission and retention, as its admission and retention are to the practical effects of its profession.

Such hearers as these, then, are converts upon *principle*; deliberate in the choice, and steady in the maintenance of their Christian profession. They enter at once into the nature and spirit of the gospel calling; discerning, as soon as proposed, the natural charms of the word of truth and salvation, and to borrow the language of an ancient author, "becoming enamoured of themⁿ." They neither misconceive its true genius and character, as a

^m Luke viii. 15.

ⁿ Thucyd. ii. 43.

scheme of discipline and probation, by which virtue is to be made perfect through suffering, like converts of the second class; nor shrink from its personal duties, and give it a secondary place in their thoughts and affections, like those of the third: but are ready to endure all things, even the loss of life, and ready to sacrifice all things, even themselves, their dearest appetites and passions, either to bear witness to its truth, and to attest their own sincerity—or to exemplify its practical excellence, and to adorn their Christian calling by a suitable life and conversation. They spiritualize their desires and pursuits, in the present life, by abstracting them, as much as possible, from things on earth, and fixing them on things in heaven. Their heart is always in heaven, because their treasure is there; and their delight and employment are to serve God continually, in the way most agreeable to his own appointment, because they are sensible of no pleasure, they are conscious of no good, so pure, so valuable, and so indeprivable, as the satisfaction and benefit of studying to serve him, and to act in all things according to his will. Nor do they with this view, like the wise man of Aristotle, or like the monks of former times, retire into solitude, and avoid their fellow men, to seek their proper good within themselves, and attain to their proper perfection, independent of natural and social relations. For they know and feel that the kingdom of Christ is not within them, in any such sense as it must be, if man were made for himself, or by becoming a Christian, ceased to belong to the world, and to have any thing in common with the system of things around him. They know that man's natural state

is a state of society; and the perfection of human virtue is the perfect discharge of man's various social obligations. They know too that the social state is the appointment of God, and the obligation to the social duties is derived from the will and authority of God; and that their duty to man, and their duty to God, so far from being incompatible together, do in fact coincide; and that the former, rightly performed, must be performed in the fear and love of God, and is then only acceptable to him, when it is discharged as a tribute of obedience to his will. And to every thing which they do below, whether as concerns themselves, or as concerns their neighbour, they impart a religious character and tendency, by referring it to God above: and for every sacrifice of personal ease, inclination, or affection, which they make here, they find an abundant compensation in the present peace and comfort, which there always is in the consciousness of pleasing God, by acting agreeably to his will; and in the hope of a blessed reward hereafter.

Yet both the native vigour of the seed, and the natural goodness of the soil, would require to be further assisted by the kindly influences of light and warmth, of dews and rains: and the health and vigour of the true gospel principle, though planted in faith and rooted in love, must yet be maintained, even in the best dispositions, by the feeding and watering of the grace of God. In the pure and primitive times of Christianity, converts of this description (and for ought we know to the contrary, the majority of believers since) might constitute the great body of the church; just as that portion of the seed, which fell upon the good ground, ought

for that very reason, to be supposed the largest of all.

Distinctions of personal character, and degrees of personal perfection, even with an equal sincerity of faith, and an equal earnestness of practice, must still always have subsisted among them, anciently as well as at present. The characters of Christians, as such, can never be absolutely uniform, any more than those of moral agents, generally: especially while the natural tempers and dispositions, or the natural talents and capabilities, of different men, however similar they may be in some respects, are so widely discriminated in others. For the Christian temper and character themselves are founded at bottom, on the natural; and whether more or less perfect, are only the correction and amendment, the purification and improvement, of the natural man.

St. Paul, as an apostle, carried his zeal in the propagation of the gospel, far beyond what its other emissaries did; yet it is not to be supposed, because he laboured more abundantly than they all, that they were idle in the work of their calling, or indifferent to the success of their ministry. The master in the parable committed to one servant five talents, to another two, and to a third one; “to each in proportion to his proper ability;” (*ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν* °); and the event proved that even of the two who received least, either was adequate, or supposed to have been adequate, to a right use of his particular trust; that is, to have improved it to a certain degree, as well as he who had received most, and was found to have gained most. The same thing is observable in the parable of the pounds;

° Matt. xxv. 15.

where though one only had gained ten pounds, by the use of one, yet another had gained five; and even the third who had gained nothing, was treated as competent to have gained something, had he been so inclined: which something, however little, yet as better than nothing, would have sufficed to satisfy the master, and to acquit the servant of blame.

St. Peter proposes an ascending scale of improvement, that is, a series of steps to perfection, when he tells his converts, “to add to their faith, virtue; “and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, “temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to “patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly “kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity^p ;” whence, as all steps in a scale of ascent are successive, and he who is only at the bottom or the middle of a ladder, is not yet at the top, it is evident that some of these virtues must be attained to before others, if they were all to be attained to in the order here recounted. St. Paul, too, says to the Philippians^q, “Whatsoever things *are* true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; “if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, “(*that they should*) think on these things:” where he recommends a variety of objects to their pursuit and approbation, all possessing a kindred nature, as being good, decent, commendable, amiable, honourable, in common, but equally diversified likewise, in the particulars or instances of that nature. He exhorts them also to be of like mind with himself, in aspiring at more and more of excellence in their

^p 2 Pet. i. 5—7.

^q Chap. iv. 8.

Christian profession; and forgetting, as he did, the things that were behind, (to which they had already attained,) to strain only, to reach only, to press on, only, after the things that were before; to which they had yet to attain^r. In the opinion of St. Paul, then, there might be degrees of proficiency in Christian goodness; none could attain to so much, but what he might aspire at more; none could achieve so much, but what he was bound to wish, and possibly might be able, to achieve somewhat more. And indeed, the very doctrine of a reward promised in proportion to works, and therefore differing in its different instances, implies a difference of desert in the recipients, and consequently a difference of personal excellence.

Thus it was that in the parable, though all the grain which fell upon the good ground, was productive, yet one part of it yielded more, and another less: a difference which could not be ascribed to the grain itself, as that was every where the same; but must be imputed to the soil, into which it happened to be received^s. Yet the good ground, notwithstanding the inferior excellence of some parts of it compared with that of others, was every where free from thorns, and every where abundantly supplied with moisture and strength from within, to resist

^r Chap. i. 13, 14, 15.

^s It is a favourite practice with the fathers to compare virginity, widowhood, and the married state, to the different degrees of productiveness in the parable; rating virginity at one hundredfold, widowhood at sixtyfold, marriage at thirtyfold: *ἑδαι τοῦ μπαλιου*. Cf. Hieron. iv. pars i. 55. *ad calc.* in Matt. xiii: pars ii. 145. *ad calc.* adv. Jovinianum; 230 *ad med.* pro libb. adv. Jovin. Apologia. Epistola xxx—Augustin. vi. 364. B: vii. 411. B. De Civitate Dei, xvi. 26. 2. &c. &c.

the heat and drought from without: and the honest and good heart in every recipient of the word, whatever might be the difference in the fruits of holiness which it should produce in some, compared with others, would still be single and unmixed—open to the gospel and the love of God, to take exclusive possession of it, and to flourish there unobstructed by any ruling, antagonist or consociated passion; and would still be sufficiently rooted in depth of principle, in strength of conviction, and in warmth and constancy of attachment, to sustain the rude shocks of external violence, and to perfect its fruit in *patience*, that is, in *endurance* †.

† In the Pastor of Hermas, the Ninth Similitude, lib. iii. p. 69. consists of a representation of twelve mountains, presenting different appearances. The first was black as soot: the second was naked and bare, without herbage: the third was covered with thorns and thistles: the fourth with herbs, the bottoms of which were dry and withered, but the tops were green; or herbs, which became parched and arid, as the sun grew hot: the fifth was very rugged, but covered with green herbs: the sixth was full of clefts or fissures, some greater, others less, in which were herbs, apparently withered: the seventh was covered with beautiful herbage, and full of all kinds of birds and beasts, that fed upon it without consuming its abundance: and so on.

This representation is borrowed ultimately from the parable; and it appears, from the exposition of the allegory, cap. xix—xxix. that different classes of hearers or converts are denoted by these mountains, as well as by the soils in the parable, and that the seven mountains, first described, answer on the whole to the four soils; the six to the three, and the seventh properly to the fourth.

Cap. xx. it is said of the third mountain, *qui spinas et tribulos habebat; tales sunt, qui crediderunt, divites quidam; quidam autem plurimis obstricti negotiis . . . hi ergo qui plurimis obligati sunt negotiis, variisque rebus; non adjungunt se*

I might here conclude my interpretation of the parable of the sower. As, however, every part of the above review shews that it relates to the first offer of the gospel, and was designed to receive, and shortly did receive, its fulfilment, in the success of that offer as addressed to the Christians of the earliest age; we may consequently observe, that it can be only in a secondary sense intended for Christians of aftertimes, or applicable to the case of converts in all ages.

The cause, indeed, which must produce a vital and active Christianity in any of its professors, is the same now, which it was originally, viz. the honest and good heart. But the danger to which the Christian world is exposed at present, is either from the operation of such moral causes as answer to the physical cause of the failure of the seed, in the first instance; tending to the utter rejection of Christianity, or the utter disregard of its moral and sanctifying influences, as in the sceptic, the infidel, the grossly profane and profligate; or from the operation of such as correspond to the grounds of the failure of the seed in the third instance; tending to the postponement of spiritual to temporal interests, the practical contradiction of their principles by the lives of nominal Christians—which is the case with the worldly-minded; with the votaries of self and sense; with the men of business, of pleasure, or fashion, of literary or scientific pursuits, of elegant tastes and acquirements, who live nevertheless without God in the world, and do not feel or practise that Christianity which they profess *servis Dei; sed aberrant; ab his negotiis revocati, a quibus suffocantur.* And so, of the seductive effect of riches.

all the while to honour and revere. As to the cause of the failure of the seed in the second instance, considered as answering to the violence of persecution working on an unsound faith, that is, an unsteady, shallow-rooted principle, from the nature of the case it can apply to those only who happen to be placed in situations, which expose the temper of their faith to the touchstone of external violence: a very common case with the early Christians, and not unexampled among Christians, from time to time, in all ages; yet not like the former, generally characteristic of the ordinary trial and probation of the church.

PARABLE SECOND. ALLEGORICAL.

THE TARES.

MATTHEW XIII. 24—30.

HARMONY, P. III. 17.

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, “ The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man, sowing good seed in his field. 25 And when men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares in the midst of the wheat, and went his way. 26 And when the blade grew up, and produced fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 And the servants of the master of the house came to him and said, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thine own field? from whence then hath it the tares? 28 And he said to them, A man, an enemy, hath done this thing. And the servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go our way and collect them together? 29 And he said, Nay; lest while ye are collecting together the tares, ye should root up the wheat along with them. 30 Let both grow on together until the reaping. And at the season of the reaping I will say to the reapers, Collect together first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them up; but the wheat gather together into my barn.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE characteristic simplicity of the parable of the sower, begins to appear upon a comparison of it even with that, which follows it next in order. There are several circumstances, which discriminate

this parable externally from the preceding, and assimilate it in general to the rest of the same class, delivered, at different times, afterwards; which it may be proper briefly to mention, before we proceed to the explanation of its material structure.

As for example, it is the first of the parables, which is ushered in by a direct comparison to the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, which might be concluded, *a priori*, to relate to one of the mysteries or *secrets* of that kingdom.

It is the first of its proper class, that turns on the representation of a moral action; that is, of a matter of fact, concerning the conduct of moral agents under such and such circumstances of situation. As far, then, as this representation may turn out to be allegorical, or directed to something beyond itself, so far the representation may be the better adapted to its end and purpose; and real moral history, or what seems to be real, of one kind, may be the vehicle employed to convey real history of another kind.

It is the first which exhibits a distinction of principal and subordinate in the agents, and therefore a corresponding difference in their respective agency; the effect of which is necessarily to render the transaction in general more complex, and the parable, which records it, more refined and artificial.

It is the first to display that agreeable peculiarity in the parabolic narrative, which arises from the mixture of the dramatic with the historical mode of representing the course of particulars: a peculiarity singularly adapted not only to the contrast of character, but to give life, animation, and vivacity, (what the Greek language would call *ἐνάργεια*;) to a simply historical narrative.

It is the first which exhibits the outlines of a double plot ; that is, of two independent œconomies, or series of events, beginning together, and running parallel to the end of the account ; one of which concerns the good seed, and the other the tares. By virtue of this conjunction and yet opposition of œconomies, there may be said to be a distinction even of principal agents in the parable ; one of them standing at the head of the œconomy relating to the good seed, and the other, at the head of that which relates to the tares.

Lastly, it is the first to display another peculiarity of structure ; in consequence of which the action in the parable, though previously in a train of proceeding to a certain result—capable of being foreseen, and evidently necessary to its consummation—breaks off before it arrives at it, producing a certain appearance of abruptness ; as if the story had ended too soon. But we shall see that this apparent abruptness serves an use and purpose, important enough to warrant the inference that it was always intended to have that effect ; and therefore that the narrative, was designedly left as it is, with the thread of particulars suspended, or prematurely brought to a close.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of its material circumstances.

First, then, the personal character of the principal party concerned in the history, is not otherwise discriminated than by one of two relations, or rather, as these relations are perfectly consistent with each other, by both ; that of the master of an household, on the one hand, and that of the owner of a field, on the other. For the purpose of the narrative, indeed,

the former of these relations is virtually merged in the latter, and the character of the master of servants is subordinate to that of the owner of a field. The parabolic character therefore of the principal personage is not absolute, but relative; and the relation is that which is entailed by the possession of property in land, and would apply to any master of an household who had a farm to cultivate and turn to good account, as well as a family to take care of and govern.

We find this circumstance of the ownership of the field twice insisted on in the narrative, with something of a peculiar emphasis; once at the outset; "The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man, sowing good seed in his field:" and again, in the course of the account, when the servants came to their master with the question, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thine own field?" No doubt it is intended to assign the most natural reason why the owner of a field, as such, should wish to turn his property therein not only to a *good* account, but if possible, to the *best* account; and could never be guilty himself of the practical folly of perverting any thing of his own from its proper application, nor even of putting it to a less profitable use, when he might obviously turn it to a better.

As then the personal description of the principal agent must necessarily determine the nature of the transaction in which he was to be engaged, that transaction would naturally be something in which he could be concerned only as the master of a field, and in the common capacity of all owners of lands, when they would turn their right and property in such possessions to their ordinary use and application. One instance of this use and application

is the sowing their fields with grain, the best and most productive which they are capable of bearing. Such is the transaction, on which the parable turns; the sowing of his *own* field, with the best kind of grain, by the act of the owner himself, in his proper relation to it.

It is not necessary to suppose that the actual sowing of the grain, however appropriately chosen in respect of the field, and however consistent with his relation as its owner, the act of sowing it there might be, was the work of the master himself. If the parable appears to imply this, it is by way of compendium, and on the familiar principle of attributing to the final cause of the result, the acts of the mediate or instrumental agents. The owner of the field was also the master of a family; and there are subordinate personages, as well as a principal one, concerned in the parable, who stand to him in the relation of his servants. It is to be presumed, that these servants would be employed upon the service of their master in his field, just as much as on any other business relating to his affairs at home: and that, excepting perhaps the first setting them about their task, or charging his menial dependents with the execution of such a duty in his behalf, (which was very proper to be the master's act,) he would prepare and sow his field by their instrumentality, not by his own. There would be just the same reason to suppose that he should reap, as that he should sow his field, himself: yet he speaks of the reapers, as we shall see hereafter, as of persons distinct not only from himself, but even from his servants also.

The sowing of the field with the grain in ques-

tion was designed for the common end and purpose of all such acts, the raising and maturing of the crop, which both rewards the labour of the tillage, and turns the soil itself to its natural account. This end must have been contemplated at first, without regard to any obstacle which might possibly arise to interfere with it afterwards; and it would continue the same as before, whether any thing subsequently occurred to interfere with it, or not. The good seed, once committed to the ground, though it had been suffered to grow there unmolested, must have been left to the natural process of vegetating and arriving at maturity, in order to be finally reaped, and lodged in the barns of the owner. Nor whatever might arise to impede the accomplishment of this purpose, and whatever might be done to remove that impediment, or to guard against its possible effects, is it to be supposed that the owner of the field, if he could help it, would abandon his original design in sowing it, or willingly sacrifice his crop, if there was any possibility of saving it.

But the owner of the field had an enemy, as any, both in public and private life, may have: and though no provocation to his enmity appears to have been given, men may have enemies without a cause, at least without a just and reasonable one, as well as with. The enmity of this man was not of recent date; it was older at least than the beginning of the transaction in the parable; and the mode in which he expresses it, was probably not the first instance of its kind. The manner, indeed, in which he is first mentioned, is a presumptive proof of both these things; both that some particular enemy is

meant, and that his enmity had been of long standing: "His enemy came," (*ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ ἐχθρός.*)

An enmity of a date more or less ancient, would be keen and malignant in proportion to its duration. The passion of hatred becomes more inveterate the longer it retains possession of the heart. Such an enmity, then, would always be watching to inflict an injury on its object; for the active impulse of malevolence is proportional to the intensity of the passive affection. It may be justly supposed, therefore, that a personal adversary of the owner of the field would be ready at any time, to take advantage of the first opportunity that chance might present for his detriment; and provided some injury were done to the object of his spite, and some gratification obtained to his own ill-will, he would be little solicitous about the instance of the injury itself, or in what manner his hostility took effect. Had accident thrown a different occasion in his way; or had the nature of the case required a different expedient to gratify his malice, he would have availed himself with equal readiness of the one, or with equal ingenuity have devised the other.

So far then as concerns the representation of the course of things in the parable, the contrivance of the adversary of the owner, which has nothing in view but to thwart and annoy him, is the natural consequence of the part previously ascribed to the owner himself. The motives and actions of enemies do necessarily run counter to those of the persons whom they hate; and whatsoever the latter may do, and for whatever purpose, it gives them delight to oppose it, if they can, and prevent it from taking effect. No sooner therefore had the owner of the field

caused it to be sown with the best and most useful grain, but his enemy desires to overrun and debase it with bad. The obviousness of such an act would be one inducement to it, since nothing could more readily suggest itself to an active and watchful spirit of malevolence; its facility would be another, as none could more easily be executed; its efficiency would be a third, since nothing, at first sight, could seem better adapted to answer the purposes of a personal hostility, or more likely to defeat the probable consequences of the care and prudence of the owner of the field, in sowing his ground originally with the best and fittest kind of seed. The effect of a promiscuous mixture of bad grain with the good, would seem to be either necessarily to choke and stifle the good, by the superior rankness of the bad; or were any attempt made to exterminate the bad, to involve the destruction, or greatly to endanger the safety of the good; or should both be allowed to grow together, to rob the good seed of its nourishment, to impair both the quality and quantity of the produce, and so to vitiate and spoil the crop: or at least, to expose the owner of the field to the contempt and ridicule of his neighbours; and on all these accounts, (what we must suppose his personal enemy to have chiefly had in view,) not a little to plague and vex him.

If now the malevolence of a personal enemy was active enough to stimulate him to the first formation of such a design; his cunning and circumspection would, no doubt, so far second his ill-will, as to make him choose the likeliest time and manner, for successfully carrying it into effect. It could not have been accomplished without the risk of detection in the

daytime ; he sets about it therefore in the night : and either not caring, or not venturing, to trust any other person with the secret, or with the execution of his purpose, he performs it, when he does perform it, by himself. “ And when men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares in the midst of the wheat, and went his way.”

This allusion to the time when men were sleeping, is not to be understood of the owner of the field, or of the members of his household, in particular ; because neither the owner, nor his people, as personally aware of any such design, or having beforehand reason to suspect such an attempt, could be supposed to require to be on their guard against it. It describes simply the time when all men, ordinarily, are off their guard and sleeping, who have no particular inducement to keep themselves awake ; that is, the time of night : a time, when every eye which might have observed it, being closed, and every impediment which might have obstructed it, being removed, a work of darkness and personal malignity could best be performed with safety.

It is a consequence of this choice of the time for the execution of the adversary's purpose, that though the introduction of the tares among the wheat could neither have been prior, nor yet much posterior to the sowing of the latter, the precise moment of their introduction would escape observation, and be unknown. It is another consequence too of the period of their introduction, at a time when men were sleeping, in the ordinary enjoyment of rest and repose at the usual season—not with the supineness of sentinels, whom drowsiness has surprised at their

post, at the moment when they ought to have been most on the alert—that those who, in the day time, would have been specially concerned to discover, and specially bound to prevent the attempt, and had they been awake and watching could not, without a culpable negligence, and a criminal betraying of their master's interests, have suffered it to pass undetected, the menials and servants of the owner himself—could not possibly be to blame for the success of the act, and for the injury thereby done to their master's property. Nor indeed, when the discovery of the mischief is ultimately made, though too late, as it would seem, to remedy its immediate effects, is the least imputation cast upon the servants on that account. The guilt of the act and of its conception both, is justly supposed to belong to the same person; the enemy of the owner himself.

The better to disguise the fact of the injury for a time, and so to render it more complete and successful in the end, the adversary made choice of a grain to be sown among the wheat, which would lie undiscovered at first, and would not be fully detected, until it should be impracticable to eradicate it without danger to the safety of the wheat. The name of this grain in the original is ζιζάνιον; a term of Oriental etymon, which it would have been better to naturalize in our language by zizan, than to attempt to render it inadequately, by any vernacular denomination which did not express its meaning.

The zizan, as the parable supposes, might be something very common in Palestine, and perhaps in other parts of the East; but I doubt whether it was ever known in our own country or in Europe.

From the testimonies produced below^a, it may be inferred that it was no mere rank, or luxuriant spe-

^a The word ζιζάνιον does not occur in the Septuagint, nor any word answering to it, in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. There is consequently much obscurity about its origin. The most probable opinion is that which derives it from the Hebrew, צן or צ, which some render *cibus*, and others *species*. This word is used Ps. cxliv. 13. twice in succession, rather in the latter than in the former sense; *de specie in speciem*, not *de cibo in cibum*; or as the margin of the authorized version has it, "from kind to kind:" that is, with all manner or kinds (of fruits and stores.) In the sense of kinds or species also, it occurs, 2 Chron. xvi. 14. The Syriac version renders ζιζάνιον by צנ.

If such be the root of the word, it seems to imply that it was known to be one sort or variety of a certain species of grain, in particular, fit for food, which we may well presume to have been *wheat*. Dr. Lightfoot cites a dictum of the rabbis, that wheat and *zonin* were not different kinds of seeds; that is, were only varieties or species of the same genus. If by *zonin* we may understand the *zizan*, this assertion would go far to prove the point in question.

The etymon of the Greek ζεία or ζειά, is probably some Oriental word; which combined with *zan*, might explain the origin of *zizan*. What the Greek *zea* was may not be exactly known; further than that it was a species of grain, resembling *far* or bread corn, though not the same thing with it, and inferior to it; which abounded too, more particularly, in Egypt and Syria. Homer applies the epithet of ζειδωπος to Egypt especially. The Septuagint render by ζείαν Isaiah xxviii. 25. as Aquila and Symmachus did Ezek. iv. 9. where our translation has in the former place, *rie*, and in the latter, *fitches*: but the margin in both places, has *spelt* (in other words ζειά) and the Septuagint, Ezek. iv. 9. has δλύρα. Pliny says, that the use of *zea* was peculiar to those who had not bread corn to use instead of it: so that it might be employed for the same purpose as wheat or barley in general, but would still be inferior to both.

The Geoponica, ii. 43. x. 87. render ζιζάνιον by αῖρα, and say, though often to be found in the midst of corn, it is de-

cies of weed, apt to take root and to spring up in cornfields, such as might be generally represented by the *darnel*, *cockle*, or *tares*; but a poor and in-

structive to it or spoils it; and if mixed up with flour or bread, it blinds those that eat of it; which is a description of a kind of lolium, viz. that which botanists call the lolium temulentum. Ovid seems to allude to this property of the *αἶρα*, under the name of the lolium also.

Ut careant loliis oculos vitiantibus agri :

Nec sterilis culto surgat avena solo.

PASTOR. i. 691.

But Theophrastus, De Causis Pl. iv. 6: Histor. Pl. ii. 5: viii. 6. 8: speaking of the transition of one sort of plant into another, that is, the degeneracy of a nobler into a baser species of the same kind; insists particularly on the change of wheat or barley (especially of wheat) into *αἶρα*: and among the various kinds of *σπέρματα*, or grain as such, considers these two only liable to this change. He admits too that certain sorts of *αἶρα* (no doubt by proper culture) may be converted into wheat. The degeneracy he attributes to excess of rain, as one chief cause, though not the only.

It seems then that the *zizan*, if really the same with the *αἶρα* of Theophrastus, was a bastard, degenerate sort of wheat; such as the best might become by neglect, bad culture, unfavourable seasons, or the like. I cannot help thinking, however, that the *zizan* of the parable was something more specifically different from wheat, than even this *αἶρα*.

The *avena*, or wild oat, probably as nearly resembled the good grain of the same sort, as the lolium did the wheat. Virgil speaks of them in conjunction.

Intereunt segetes : subit aspera sylvæ

Lappæque tribulique : interque nitentia culta

Infelix lolium, et steriles dominantur avenæ.

GEORGIC. i. 152.

By Plutarch likewise some such natural productions as these, if not as the *zizan*, are alluded to, vi. 185: De amici et adulatoris discrimine: ὥσπερ γὰρ (οἶμαι) τῶν ἀγρίων σπερμάτων ὅσα καὶ σχῆμα καὶ μέγεθος παραπλήσιον ἔχοντα τῷ πυρῷ συμμέμικται, χαλεπὴν ἔχει τὴν ἀποκάθαρσιν, κ', τ. λ. though he is speaking, it is true, of the separation at the time of threshing or winnowing.

ferior kind of wheat. The contrast, therefore, which is implied between the original purpose of the owner, for the use of his property and his own advantage, and the subsequent contrivance of his personal enemy to defeat or disappoint it, is this; that whereas the former, as was natural, had caused his land to be planted with the fittest, the noblest, and most genuine sort of grain, the latter succeeds, as he thinks, in debasing and corrupting the good, by the introduction of a spurious and degenerate kind of seed: the same in general as the good, but differing from it, as a worse and much inferior sort of a certain thing differs from a better and superior.

It is a consequence of this affinity of species between the zizan and the wheat, that the first shoots and blade, and even the stalks and flowers of the former, resemble those of the latter. While the good and the bad grain, then, were each young and tender, they would grow together with no external mark of difference between them; there would be no visible distinction in their appearance or properties, to discriminate them asunder. So that it is with an evident attention to truth and propriety, that the history proceeds to say, “And when the blade “grew up, and produced fruit, then appeared the “tares (*or* zizan) also:” which does not imply that the blade of the zizan had not sprung up already, as well as the blade of the wheat, but that, though both had sprouted and sprung up together, or the one very soon after the other, they had not been distinguishable asunder, until each was producing its fruit^b.

^b Inter triticum et zizania, quod nos appellamus lolium, quamdiu herba est, et nondum culmen venit ad spicam, grandis similitudo est et in discernendo aut nulla aut perdifficilis dis-

By this production of fruit, however, we are not to understand the bringing of their fruit to maturity; for the time when corn ripens its fruit is the time of harvest, and when the discovery of the zizan was made, the season of harvest was not yet come; and even the good grain itself required to grow some time longer, in order to be ready for the sickle. It implies, then, merely the first apparent formation of the fruit; an effect which takes place at that period in the process of fructification, when the stalk of such plants, as wheat, is shooting into the ear, and the flowers, which precede the fruit, begin to be seen. And this is exactly the time in the growth of such plants, when the difference between good grain, of the genuine sort, and that bastard species, called zizan, which resembles the good externally, but is so much inferior to it in intrinsic excellence, begins to be clearly perceptible.

The discovery of the existence of zizan in the midst of the wheat, though made at a period in their progress to maturity, when they could no longer escape detection, is naturally attributed to the servants of the owner; whose duties about their master's property could not fail to make them first acquainted with it. Now, if from their master's character they knew that he would sow nothing in his own ground, but the fittest kind of grain; if common sense told them, no one would willingly turn his property to any but the best account; more especially, if they were aware that by their own

tantia: Hieronym. iv. pars i. 59. *ad med.*: in Matt. xiii. The greater part of Jerome's life was spent in Palestine, where he must have had frequent opportunities of seeing and observing the zizan.

instrumentality, or in any other way, the field had been already sown, as fully and effectually as the nature of the case required, with the most appropriate sort of seed; no doubt it would strike them with surprise to see it overrun with zizan. It is this surprise which brings them to their master, to ask an explanation of so unexpected a phenomenon: and such an inquiry, though made for the satisfaction of their own perplexity, must yet have been made in the consciousness of innocence, and that whatsoever should be found to have produced the zizan, no blame would redound to themselves. And this was indeed the case: for though the penetration of their master at once ascribes the effect to its right cause, the malice of a personal enemy, he finds no fault with his servants for not having sooner discovered, much less for not having entirely prevented, his attempt.

The indefinite manner in which he speaks of this enemy, may seem to imply that though he concluded the act in question to be the doing of some enemy, he knew not of what; contrary to our former assumption, that he had one adversary in particular, whose hostility was of long standing, and always on the watch to do him an injury. But the indefinite manner of the reply proves nothing against the personal knowledge of the master, who his enemy might be; but simply the personal ignorance of the servants about the cause of so extraordinary a phenomenon, as the rise and growth of tares in the midst of a field, which they supposed to contain nothing but wheat. It is the mode of replying which would naturally be adopted, to settle such an uncertainty on such a subject. "You know," may the

master be considered to have said, “ that I caused
“ my field to be sown only with wheat; and you
“ tell me it is full of tares. Be not surprised at this.
“ It is very plain that an enemy has sown them
“ there; for none but an enemy could be capable of
“ such an act.”

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that the personal agency of the servants, which we supposed to be virtually concerned in the action of the parable from the first, begins to be open and determinate, at the time when the discovery of the zizan is made. Now when they heard that the existence of so noxious an ingredient in the midst of their master's property, and so likely to injure his wheat, was no fortuitous, or natural circumstance, but the express deed of some personal enemy of his, it was reasonable that they should next inquire whether they must go and collect it out of the field; which seemed the only means left of disappointing the malice of that enemy, and preventing the consequences of his act. And this proposal, being the spontaneous result of a sincere zeal for the good of their master, was so far innocent and laudable in the servants.

But the zeal of his servants, though commendable in itself, required to be overruled, under the circumstances of the case, by the prudence and circumspection of the master: who, though he might well wish to get rid of the zizan, could not be supposed desirous to sacrifice his wheat. Now as the zizan had been sown, at first, promiscuously in every part of the wheat; and had since been growing so long undisturbed, in the midst of it; the roots of both must have taken firm hold on the ground, and

have become so mingled and interwoven, that however easy to discriminate, it would be impossible to detach the plants asunder. To pull up the zizan would be either to eradicate, or greatly to disturb the wheat: and the wheat was not ripe enough to admit of being pulled up for the harvest, yet too far advanced to maturity to be disturbed with safety in the ground.

There was consequently no alternative, even after the evil grain had been discriminated from the good by an indubitable mark of distinction, but to let it continue as unmolested still, as it had continued before; growing in the same field as the good, twining in numberless instances its roots and stalks about those of the good, sharing in the virtue of the same soil, warmed and cherished by the same sun, nourished and fed by the same dews and rains, and maturing its proper fruit, in all respects, by the same natural process, as the good.

As, however, the extermination of the zizan is not renounced in intention, only deferred in the execution, this permission to continue unmolested after its discovery, not less than before, is strictly and properly a *toleration*, and nothing more. And it is a toleration, distinguished by the following characteristics. It is merely *temporary*: the utmost length of its duration is the interval between the discovery of the zizan, and the harvest season of the wheat. It is granted while it lasts, not for the sake of the zizan, but for the sake of the wheat; which being as yet unripe, must be suffered to go on growing until it should become ripe. And the extermination of the zizan being suspended only until the wheat was ripe, and to be carried into effect when that was

the case, this extermination would then be the more solemn and complete, and the different disposal of the two kinds of grain, each according to the law of its own nature, or to what they deserved and were fitted for in themselves, respectively—the one to be burned, the other to be gathered into barns—would be so much the more solemn and illustrious.

Under these circumstances, the remark that we made in the outset, upon the existence of a double œconomy in this parable, one in relation to the good seed, and another to the bad, which begin together, and run parallel to the end of the transaction ; at the head of one of which the enemy of the owner of the field stands as distinctly, as the owner himself at the head of the other ; is seen to be just and true. And on this account the parable can be called with propriety, neither the parable of the good seed, nor yet of the zizan or tares ; but of the good seed and the zizan, growing together.

The command ascribed to the master ; “ Let both
“ grow together until the reaping : and at the season
“ of the reaping, I will say to the reapers, Collect
“ together first the tares and bind them in bundles
“ to burn them up : but the wheat gather together
“ into my barn :” at first sight exhibits some difficulty. Were a field among ourselves to be sown promiscuously with two sorts of grain, as wheat and barley, according to our mode of reaping and securing the crop, it would be no very easy or practicable task to sift and separate them after they were cut, much less in the process of cutting, with a view to dispose of the one, before any thing could be done with the other.

But the eastern method of reaping grain was an-

ciently either to cut off the ears, close to the stalk, leaving the straw on the ground ; or to pluck up all by the roots ^c : in either of which ways, it would be very possible for the zizan to be separated from the wheat, in the course of the reaping, and to be laid by, if necessary, in heaps or bundles, for an use or purpose different from the intended disposal of the wheat. In such a process of gathering in the crop of a field, every stalk and ear would pass individually through the hands of the reaper ; and might be treated as he thought fit.

What we may, perhaps, notice as most peculiar, and most characteristic of the process in the present instance, is the collecting and binding of the zizan together first, in order to be burned, before the gathering of the good grain into its proper houses of store. It was usual in the East for the trituration to begin, as soon as the reaping was over ; and when the grain had been separated from the husk, then to burn up the chaff, and sometimes the straw, as refuse and unserviceable ^d. This order of the

^c The method of reaping by cutting off the ears is alluded to Job xxiv. 24, and thereby shewn to be very ancient ; unless, (as Mr. Harmer shews from sir John Chardin to be the case at present,) the allusion be supposed to the thrashing of the produce on the ground by means of a machine, which at the same time chops off the ears. Vol. i. 176. chap. iii. obs. viii.

Yet it is certainly a mode of reaping still in use in the East, to cut off the ears, and pull up the stubble ; (Harmer, i. 372. chap. iv. obs. xii.) and various travellers, in those parts, testify to having seen the people employed in the corn fields, plucking up the stalks by the roots. Not that, however, this practice was universal, or that the more common one of cutting it down by the sickle, was not also to be observed in some places. Harmer, ii. 462. and 465. chap. x. obs. xxxiv.

^d There are various passages in the Old Testament, which shew

event, it seems, was strictly to be observed in the combustion of the zizan; which was to take effect before any thing was done with the wheat, or at least, was not to be longer deferred, than until the refuse part of the wheat might be burnt up in the same fire together with it, before the grain itself was safely bestowed in barns.

As the extermination of the zizan was to be deferred until the time of reaping, that is, the proper season when wheat is ripe for the sickle; the actual period of the destruction of the former would coincide with that of securing and laying up the other; and the same persons, who would always have been wanted to cut down and to gather in the wheat, under the circumstances of the case, would be the proper agents in executing the sentence on the zizan. But this would be a part of their office and ministry, as reapers of the good grain, which could

that the corn, when reaped, was threshed on the spot; the grain collected into barns; the chaff and the refuse burned: Exod. xv. 7: Isaiah v. 24: xxxiii. 11: Micah iv. 12, 13: Nahum i. 10. Compare Matt. iii. 12: Luke iii. 17.

Ovid alludes to a similar usage,

Utque leves stipulæ dentis adolentur aristis. Metamorph. i. 492.

It appears from Chrysostom too, that the threshing must have taken place at the same time with the reaping, about Antioch at least, in Syria: *Καὶ θερισταὶ δὲ ὁμοίως, πρὸ πολλῶν τῶν ἡμερῶν, καὶ δρεπάνην θήγουσιν, καὶ ἄλωνα παρασκευάζουσι, καὶ βούην καὶ ἄμαξαν, καὶ ὅσα ἂν ἄλλα πρὸς τὸν ἄμητον αὐτοῖς συντελεῖ:* i. 402. B. C. Hom. xxxv.

Mr. Harmer observes, from Maillet, that immediately after reaping, the straw is chopt, and the grain trodden out in the field: i. 424. chap. v. obs. iii. As they use the straw for provender at present, and in fact did so anciently, the part burned would commonly be the chaff, and the stubble as such. Harmer, iv. 119. chap. viii. obs. cxxxviii.

not have been natural to it from the first. These reapers, too, whose instrumentality is thus prospectively alluded to, as destined to execute so important an office as the excision of the zizan from the wheat, and so essential both to defeat the contrivance of the enemy, and to realize the original purpose of the owner in sowing his field with only one, and the best, kind of grain—may be a part of the servants of the master, that is, members of his household in general; but they cannot be that part of them with whom he was conversing, when he spoke of his intentions with regard to the present and the future disposal of the two sorts of grain, respectively; viz. that part of his servants, who probably sowed his field at first—who seem to have been charged with the care and superintendence of it, afterwards—who certainly made the discovery of the zizan within it, and came to their master to inform him of that fact, and to request his directions what to do either in suffering the zizan to remain, or in taking measures to eradicate it from the field.

If, now, the design of the adversary of the owner had any object in view, but his temporary annoyance and vexation, it may be presumed that an arrangement like this, which proposed to compass the destruction of the zizan, and so far to undo his work, at last, without injury or detriment meantime, to the wheat; was well qualified to defeat it, and to restore things, as nearly as possible, to the same situation as if the original intention of the owner, with respect to the use and application of his field, had never been disturbed by any accident from without. Nor can it be doubted that as all the parties in the

parable mutually acquiesce in this arrangement, in due time it would be carried into effect. But we do not see it actually executed ; it is left only to implication that it will be ; and so far the narrative terminates abruptly. It terminates, however, at the point of time, when the discovery of the tares has just been made, too late to eradicate them, yet too early to cut down the wheat ; when, consequently, a toleration for a certain period, greater or less in duration, is necessary to be granted to *them*, even for the sake of the wheat : and it terminates with a prospective view of their excision at last—a view, which however long its consummation might be *deferred*, would doubtless sometime be realized by the event. The better then to represent the continuance of things in the same state in which they are at last discovered—a state, which though a defect and a blemish, compared with their original constitution, and ultimately to be remedied and corrected, was yet to be tolerated a little longer, and could not prematurely be amended—the very abruptness with which the history breaks off, may have a significant use and meaning.

THE MORAL.

The interpretation which our Saviour has given of this parable also, is sufficient to prove that it contains an allegory ; and it is easy to collect, from the particulars of his explanation, what is the meaning of the allegory, or the nature of that real history which is personated by the parabolic. I will consider those particulars by and by. At present I observe merely, that had we been left to deduce the moral of the parable from the joint import of its

principal circumstances, it is manifest from the review which has just been taken of them, that it must be pronounced to turn upon the following propositions, which are intimately connected, and embrace the sum and substance of the whole.

First, with what end and view, the owner of a certain field caused it to be sown with grain of the best and most appropriate sort.

Secondly, by what means it came to pass that, in course of time, this good seed was found to be mixed with, and debased by, bad.

Thirdly, for what reasons, even after the discovery of the bad seed in the midst of the good, it was allowed to continue to grow with the consent of the owner, in his own field, along with the good.

Fourthly, what should be ultimately done to separate the bad from the good, and to restore the field to its former integrity, and to its original use and purpose.

As this joint import of the material circumstances of the parable is compared at the outset to the kingdom of heaven—if we are at liberty to understand by this phrase the gospel dispensation, in the comprehensive sense explained elsewhere^e, of a state of probation preparatory to a state of retribution—the correspondency of the real to the parabolic history must be sought for in a certain original purpose, connected with that dispensation—in a certain matter of fact, at present existing, and apparently contradictory to that purpose—and in a certain future contrivance or remedy, which will reconcile the two things together.

The explanation which our Saviour gave of this

^e Introd. chap. x.

parable, was given at the request of his disciples, as well as that of the preceding; but it is evident from the slightest comparison of them together, that this is much the more concise and partial of the two. The parable of the sower was interpreted throughout: the explanation of the present parable, so far as it enters into detail, is confined to the circumstances at the beginning and end of the account. It is dispatched too with a succinctness, which very plainly implies that its author intended to do no more than communicate the most general and cursory view of the meaning of the parable. To consider, however, the particulars which are explained.

First, "the field," said he, "is the world^f." Now the field, in the parable, is the locality within which the labours of the sower, whether of the better or the worse kind of grain, are alike discharged; it is the situation in which both the good and the bad grain, after being sown, are each supposed to grow. If this field denotes the world, we cannot limit such a locality to any one particular community, more than another: and the real history which answers to the parabolic, so far as they both concern a proper scene of action, must be something connected with the future gospel dispensation, which would every where be true, and every where, in due course of time, be verified by experience and observation.

"The good seed were the children of the kingdom^f:" a phrase, which must here be understood subordinately to the analogy of the Hebrew idiom, and of other instances of its occurrence. It is to be met with however, only once besides in the gospels, and nowhere in any other part of the New Testa-

^f Matt. xiii. 38.

ment^g: and it stands in that instance, (as I shall have a future opportunity of shewing more at large^h.) agreeably to the genius of the Hebrew language, for the particular relation of a son of Abraham, and in that capacity an inheritor of the kingdom of God, considered as a state of felicity in another life, the destined reward of Christian faith and perseverance in this.

“He who sowed the good seed was the Son of “manⁱ.” which being a personal designation of our Lord, it follows that the good seed, that is, the children of the kingdom, who are expressly of *his* planting, must be believers in Christ, that is, Christians in general; and that the immortal existence which is theirs by right of inheritance, in virtue of their relation as children of the kingdom, is one to which they become entitled by virtue of their relation to Christ. It follows, also, that the matter of fact which answers to the œconomy in the parable, whatever be the point where it terminates, cannot take its rise from an earlier period than the formal commencement of the gospel dispensation, before which, believers in Christ, as such, could as yet have no being.

“The tares (or zizan) were the children of the “wicked one, (*that is*, of the *evil one*,) and the enemy “who sowed them was the Devil^k.” which being the case, as the children or plantation of the evil one are thus personally opposed to the children of the kingdom, the plantation of the Son of man; and as the sower or father of the one is personally opposed to the sower or spiritual father of the other,

^g Matt. viii. 12.

^h Vide the Exposition of Parable xvi.

ⁱ Matt. xiii. 37.

^k Ver. 38, 39.

whatever may be further denoted by these zizans, in contradistinction to the wheat, thus much will be certain; they cannot be those who are designed for an immortal inheritance by virtue of a certain relation to Jesus Christ; they must be persons, who are destined to be excluded from such an inheritance, and for the defect of the very same principle of desert, the very same qualification in their case, which entitles the others to it.

“The harvest (*or* reaping) was the end of the “world;” that is, as the phrase may be rendered, “the conclusion of the period of ages¹ :” a reference to a certain preliminary interval of duration, which becomes appropriate and significant, if it be understood of the length of time appointed for the continuance of the present scheme of probation, which we have shewn to be coextensive with the duration of the existing visible church^m. The œconomy of the parable, then, taking its rise from the formal commencement of the gospel dispensation, extends to the consummation of it also; and consequently is commensurate from first to last, with the duration of a state of probation on Christian principles, in the present life.

“The reapers were the angels:” whose presence at the day of judgment in attendance upon Christ, and whose personal instrumentality in carrying into effect the different dispensations of that day, whether as affecting Christians in particular or all mankind indiscriminately, are clearly attested by every passage of scripture, which contains any allusion to the circumstances of that event, or to the return of Christ, at the appointed time, to judgment. The

¹ Matt. xiii. 39.

^m Introd. chap. ix.

œconomy of the parable, then, comprehends the final judgment, with reference to the proper class of persons who are the subjects thereof; and the separation of the zizan from the wheat, which is made at the time of reaping them both, is the last event in the continuance of the state of probation, but the first in the commencement of the state of retribution—the preliminary separation of the children of the evil one from the children of the kingdom—which, in the nature of things, must precede both the punishment of the one, and the bestowing of their reward on the other.

Our Saviour has added that the fire which was destined to consume the zizan, after its separation from the wheat, was typical of “the furnace of fire, “which should ultimately receive all things that “offend, (*or* all scandals,) and all the workers of “iniquity,” after they should have been gathered out of his kingdom^u; and he has left it to be implied that the granaries, appointed for the reception of the wheat, are those “many mansions in the “house of his Father,” appropriated to the children of the kingdom, where “the righteous shall shine “forth as the sun^o” in the enjoyment of their promised inheritance.

Upon the whole, then, it would be sufficiently evident, even from so concise an explanation of the parable, as was thus vouchsafed, that its moral must be—The original design and natural tendency—the present constitution—and the ultimate disposal—of the existing visible church; with an express regard and reference to certain personal distinctions of character, in the members of which it is com-

^u Matt. xiii. 40—42.

^o Ibid. 43.

posed: its original design and natural tendency, as what it was always intended, and always adapted to have been—its present constitution, as what it actually is—its ultimate disposal, as what it shall hereafter become—and the difference in the personal character of its members, respecting the promiscuous conjunction of good and bad, of real and nominal Christians, in the same community of professing believers in Christ.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The existing gospel dispensation, considered in this point of view, furnishes a variety of analogies to the material circumstances in the parable; which I shall proceed to point out.

As first; the character of the principal parabolic personage was determined by his relation to the field; and the character of Jesus Christ as the Son of man, in the gospel dispensation which answers to the kingdom of heaven, is defined by his relation to the Christian church. The personal relation of the one was that of the owner of the field; and the personal relation of the other is that of the Lord and Master of the church. Hence as the part and office ascribed to the former in the parable, were something which necessarily concerned the use and application of his field, so the part and office in the Christian scheme of probation, which belong to Jesus Christ, so far as they arise out of his relation to the church, are something which as naturally concern the being, constitution, and design of the existing Christian church.

The character of the subordinate personages was determined by their relation to the principal; and

their relation to the principal was that of servants to the master of an household. This relation, it has been shewn^p, may exist between Christ as the Head, and Christians as the members, of the same family of faith in general; and therefore between Christ as the Head, and any class of Christians as one part of his household, or one integral division of the members of the visible church, in particular. It may subsist, therefore, between Christ, on the one hand, and the ministers of his religion, on the other; and if it applies to the relative situation of Christ and of the ministers of religion, in general, it cannot be incongruous to the relation of Christ and of his apostles to each other, in particular.

The field, the possession of which determines the personal relation of the owner, and the locality of which is the receptacle of the grain, must answer to the external limits of the visible church, which is the property of Jesus Christ, and contains the believers in him; and the grain, which is planted and grows in that locality, must be the congregation of the members of the Christian church, who are placed in a state of probation within it. Nor is it any objection to this construction of the import of the field, that our Saviour himself has declared it to be the *world*. For where are Christians, though placed in a state of probation within the visible church, to be found, except in the world? or what distinction can be made between the church itself, as a religious society which consists of a certain part of mankind, and so much at least of the world as is comprehended in its pale? The world is the common receptacle of every form and modification of society,

^p Introd. chap. viii.

whether religious or civil: and if a religious community no less than a political one, must still have a local habitation in this life, either the church of Christ cannot be distinguished from the aggregate of individual Christians, who compose its congregation; or if it must be so distinguished, it can answer to no idea but that of the visible, external boundaries of the different societies, within which they dwell.

But the field which was affirmed to be the world, must be commensurate *with* the world; and cannot with propriety be restricted to one part of it, more than another: and the limits of the visible church, which answer to those of this field, can be the locality of no Christian church, which falls short of the extent and capacity of the catholic or universal church. As there was but one field to receive the grain, so can there be but one church, the recipient of Christians, which will properly answer to it: and as the whole of the grain was supposed to be sown in that field, so the entire body of Christians must be supposed to be comprehended in that church. The catholic church alone will answer to this description of the field, and the congregation of the catholic church to this idea of the grain which is sown there; the former, as the aggregate of innumerable particular churches, and the latter, as the aggregate of innumerable particular congregations. The number of individual Christian societies throughout the world, may be indefinite; but they all make up only one catholic or universal Christian society as such. There may be various shades of distinction between the members of one particular congregation and those of another; but there can be no difference to distinguish the mem-

bers of the same universal church as such, from each other.

A common nature enters equally into all the species, and all the individuals belonging to the same genus. Each Christian society therefore, must agree with the rest in some things, as all are component parts of one catholic church, while it must differ from them in others, as one part of the same whole, or one species of the same genus, in certain circumstances of an individual character, will differ from the rest. These properties of a common nature, in the possession of which every individual member of the universal church of Christ, must alike agree, are those circumstances and peculiarities of distinction, independent of any reference to particular places or particular divisions of mankind, without which we cannot so much as conceive the idea of an existing visible church. We may define these circumstances, in the most general and comprehensive manner, by the following criteria; the recognition and reception of one and the same revealed word of God, as the sole, authoritative rule of faith and practice—the observance of certain common external forms and ceremonies, among which none can be considered so essential as the two Christian sacraments—the existence and possession of an established ministry—and the celebration of public worship, at stated times, in concert. The church, which in all countries and among all societies of mankind, unites these several criteria, or the most important of them, is adumbrated by the field in the parable; the right and property of one particular owner, as that universal church every where is, of one Lord and Master, Christ. And were

the field to be considered strictly the world, or were the limits of this church actually coextensive with those of the world, still the world, and its compass, would be as much his by right of creation, as the church and all that it contains, by virtue of redemption.

This right of ownership in the field was twice alluded to in the history, with somewhat of an observable emphasis, as naturally assigning the reason, why the owner should have wished to apply his field to its best use, by sowing the best kind of grain in it, and that alone. The final end of such an act was partly the good of the owner, and partly that of the grain; of the former, in the personal benefit which would redound to himself from the enjoyment of the produce of his field, in due season; of the latter, in the care and pains to be bestowed on the culture of the grain while growing, in reaping its fruit when matured, and in gathering it at last into barns, for its safe keeping and preservation. In like manner, what could be the final end of such a dispensation as that which placed mankind in a state of probation on Christian principles, in subjection to a good and holy discipline—the effect of which might be to purify their moral nature in this life, and so render them worthy of everlasting happiness in another—but the glory of God, the author and appointer of the scheme itself, and the good of man, for whose improvement and perfection it was intended? It was natural that the owner of the field, having such an object in view, should plant good seed only in his land; and it is manifest that none but the best was calculated fully to answer his purpose: nor can it

be supposed a matter of indifference to Christ, as the Lord and Master of the church, of what moral qualifications the characters of Christians, the visible professors of his religion, should consist. It cannot be indifferent to the Head of the church, whether the members, which nominally belong to and compose his body, are worthy of the name and relation which they bear, or not. The very idea of the subjection of moral and responsible agents to a certain trial and discipline, with a view to such and such personal results, supposes a corresponding personal fitness and capacity for such a trial and discipline, in the subjects themselves; if the proposed results are to be realized by the event. The gospel scheme of probation may be indispensable even for the bad, but it will answer its desired intent solely for the good: it may be necessary to leave the former without excuse, and to render their ultimate condemnation so much the more unavoidable and just; but it will produce its proper effect, and fulfil the benevolent design of its author, only as the appointed means of ensuring the ultimate salvation of the latter.

Though the principal personage was described as the owner of the field, and though the sowing of the proper seed in his own field was apparently attributed to him, yet we shewed it was by no means necessary to suppose that the actual sowing was performed by him: and if the field denotes the visible or external limits of the catholic church; if the owner, in his personal capacity, denotes Jesus Christ, as the Head of this church; if the grain, which is planted in the field, stands for Christian believers composing the congregation of the catholic church; it follows that, the personal

agency, by which the grain was sown in that field, that is, by which Christian believers were planted and settled in Christian societies, upon Christian principles, within that church, was not the agency of our Lord himself, but that of his apostles. Our Lord collected, ordained, and commissioned apostles as ministers of the future gospel; but he neither did, nor in consistency with his proper character, could he have collected, organized, and disciplined the church of which he was to be the Head; no more than the owner of a field, who had servants to execute the subordinate duties of his household, could with propriety have taken upon himself what belonged to them, and must be done by them in his stead.

The final end of Christ's coming into the world with reference to himself, was that, after living and dying and rising again for our salvation, he might be preached to all mankind as the object of a saving faith; the final end of his collecting and ordaining his apostles during his personal continuance on earth, was that, having witnessed the facts of his personal history, they might publish them, after his departure to heaven, in their evangelical sense, to the world.

The servants of a master are naturally intrusted with the care of his property, as well as with the execution of menial duties in and about his household. The apostles of Christ had the care of the church of Christ, as the property of their Master, committed to them (as the ministers of religion since have had); as well as the business of forming and planting it in his stead. It appeared too, from the parable, that the servants of the owner consi-

dered it an article of their duty, by virtue of their relation to him, to have exterminated the zizan, as soon as they discovered it, in his field; which is a presumptive proof that they knew it always to be their office to disseminate and take care of the good grain. And they whose province it was, acting under a certain direction and superintendence, to bring the Christian church into being, may well be supposed the appointed curators to watch over and take care of it, when in being. Such were the apostles originally; and such have been the ministers of religion, their successors, ever since.

As there was a time, in the history of the field, when nothing but good grain existed within it; so there may have been, and perhaps there must have been a time, when none but sincere believers were to be found in the church. We may justly suppose that this was the case, when the congregation of the church still consisted only of the apostles, and of those who, like the apostles, were under the immediate control of the Holy Ghost, in his sanctifying as much as in his miraculous operation in their behalf. Nor can we read the description which is left on record in the first chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, relating to the nature and constitution, the principles and employments, of the first Christian society, viz. among the Hebrews, without concluding that the great body of the faithful in these early times, coeval with the birth of the gospel, were sound in their belief, and pure in their practice; as became those who were under the direct superintendence of the apostles, as they were of the Holy Ghost: that there were neither corruptions of doctrine, to the prejudice of Christian truth, nor

corruptions of life and conduct, to the disparagement of Christian holiness, as yet in being among them.

But the owner of the field had an adversary, whose enmity was of long standing; whose malice was constantly on the watch to do him an injury; and whose subtlety was as effectual to execute, as his hatred to suggest any evil design against him. If this adversary was the Devil—*his* enmity to God is as old as the creation, and for aught that we know to the contrary, goes even beyond that date. The temptation of our first parents, the first act in which we see him to have been personally engaged, was an act of equal malevolence against God and against man: and the only mode in which his power and intelligence, great as they are both, though subject to the permissive providence of the Almighty, have been employed since, has been in opposing, and to the utmost of his ability in thwarting, the counsels of God for the good of mankind: with which view his malice and cunning have been almost as inexhaustible, and certainly as indefatigable, in contriving the means of evil, as the benevolence and wisdom of God, in devising the expedients of good. No provocation appeared to have been given to the enmity of this adversary of the owner in the parable; nor has scripture assigned the first cause of the enmity of the Devil against God. He is described as his enemy, absolutely, as if he had no enemy but him: and if the Devil is not the sole, he is yet the capital, antagonist of God—and the malice or hostility of every other enemy of the divine power and goodness, but him, are prompted and stimulated by his, and as instru-

ments, by which he works, are rendered subservient to his own.

The kind of injury which the malice of this enemy suggested, was to sow the field with bad grain, simply because its owner had previously sown it with good; and by that means to render the field unprofitable, or less available to its proper purpose, the nourishment, increase, and maturity of the good. The species of seed made choice of to vitiate and debase the produce of the field, was one which resembled the good seed externally, though much inferior to it in those properties of a common nature, which determined the individual excellence of either. Compared with each other, there was no difference between them, but what there necessarily is between a nobler and better species of the same genus or class of things, and a degenerate and baser one. In other respects too, the external circumstances of the zizan, and its natural history, were analogous to those of the wheat. It was sown by a similar process; it was received into the same field; it was nourished by the same natural supplies; it partook of the virtue of the same soil; it grew indiscriminately in the midst of the wheat, and could not be distinguished for a time from the wheat; its roots in numberless instances were mixed and intertwined with those of the wheat.

All these are circumstances of distinction, to characterise and oppose the different productions of one and the same field, which, if the field be understood of the church, will apply to no description of things therein, but the division of its members into the good and the bad—the sincere and the insincere,

the real and the nominal—who make up the complex of professing Christians, and constitute the congregation of the existing visible church. The relative situation of each of these divisions of its members, with respect to each other and to the church which comprehends them both, answers to that of the two kinds of grain, with reference to each other and to the field; as agreeing in every external criterion and badge of distinction, which characterise a nominal Christian; professing to acknowledge and believe in the same scriptures; conforming to the same external usages and ceremonies of religion; partaking apparently in the same sacraments, and means of grace; and in a multiplicity of cases, from a common locality, kindredship, acquaintanceship—and the other ties of society in general, blended indiscriminately together, and connected indissolubly with each other.

The spirit of the description in the parable will not exclude from its scope and application, any but those, who from the nature of the case are no members of the visible church, at all; either because they never were so, as in the instance of those who have never been converted to the gospel—or though they may once have belonged to it, because they have ceased to do so—whether by their own act, as in the case of the infidel and apostate who have voluntarily renounced Christianity, or by the act of others who have power to eject from the church, as in the instance of persons excommunicated by a lawful authority and for a lawful and sufficient cause, so long as that spiritual censure continues unremitted upon them. As to all other descriptions of Christians, who nominally belong to

the church of Christ—the distinction of nature *internally*, and yet the identity of circumstances *externally*, in the zizan compared with the wheat, as alike the productions of the same field, must extend even to heretics and schismatics, who have never been solemnly excluded from the communion of the body of the church, and are just as much members of the external and visible church, as the most orthodox themselves, and the most faithful observers of Christian unity.

As, then, the sowing of good grain in his own field, was naturally the work of its lawful master, so the sowing of bad in the field of another, was just as naturally the act of an enemy of the owner. And if neither corruptions of doctrine, nor inconsistencies of practice, to the prejudice of his own religion, and of that uniformity of character and conduct which ought to distinguish the common professors of the same holy faith and discipline, could possibly emanate from the author of the religion itself; to what must their existence be ascribed, if they came to arise in the church, but to the malice and machinations of his personal adversary, the Devil? whose agency, as the first source of evil, is every where, in the present state of things, coextensive with the agency of God, as the first author of good, and whose contrivances to bring about and accomplish his purposes of evil, do necessarily for a time run counter to the dispensations of God, which have the good of his creatures for their object—though they can never ultimately rise superior to them.

The final end of a scheme of probation, as constituted on Christian principles, and therefore peculiar

to the Christian dispensation, is indeed the glory of God and the salvation of mankind ; but it is not to be accomplished without the concurrence of those who are subjected to it, in a voluntary conformity to all its obligations, and a steady perseverance in the integrity both of Christian faith and of Christian practice. It must be liable to be greatly endangered, if not to be entirely defeated, by the want of the proper personal qualifications to give it effect ; by the admixture of contrary principles in the elements of the Christian character ; an admixture, inconsistent with the unity of the scheme, and the simplicity of the end proposed by it—that purification, improvement, and perfection, which are the natural fruit of the same holy and perfective discipline.

If, however, the master of the field, in sowing the good seed there, acted by means of his servants ; perhaps, on the principle of analogy, even his enemy in sowing the bad amongst the good, might not act exclusively by himself. The malice of the Devil has always wrought by instruments of its own, as much as the goodness of God. There were false prophets, under the old dispensation, as well as true ; and there have been false apostles, under the Christian dispensation, besides the true—and ministers of Satan in the very bosom of the Christian church, professing to work by the same commission, and even in the same cause, as the evangelists of the gospel themselves. It is in the power of Satan, and it is often expedient for Satan, the better to disguise and accomplish his purposes, to transform himself into an angel of light ; and with a similar view, he is just as able, and not less frequently obliged to invest his ministers and emissaries also with a cha-

racter and appearance, externally resembling those of the true servants of Jesus Christ.

The mystery of iniquity had already begun to work in the time of St. Paul. The personal agency of the Devil is no doubt concerned both in first raising up, and subsequently cooperating with his own instruments: but if these are as much *his* servants, as the faithful minister of the gospel is the servant of Christ; if the end and effect of *their* labours are as much the extension of *his* power and influence, as the aim and result of the labours of the others are the extension of the empire and authority of Christ; *their* instrumentality may be called the agency of Satan, in the same sense that the ministry of his own servants may be styled the agency of Christ.

The introduction of zizan in order to debase and vitiate the wheat, could not have preceded the sowing of the latter; and in the nature of things, corruptions of Christian faith or practice could not have been prior to the purity of either. All corruption is the perversion of that which before was uncorrupt. Yet the wheat could not have been long sown, before the zizan was sown among it: and the case of Ananias and Sapphira, recorded so early in the Acts of the Apostles, (perhaps with an intentional reference to the present parable,) the first conception of whose offence is expressly attributed to the instigation of Satan, is a clear proof how soon one or two corrupt and worldly minded Christians, if not more, began to appear in that virtuous society of true believers. The rise of Simon Magus; the various forms and modifications of Gnosticism, which took their origin from him, and from his dis-

ciples; the false prophets or teachers, whose appearance is predicted by our Saviour in the prophecy on the Mount; the Judaizing teachers generally; the men speaking perverse things, alluded to by St. Paul in his address to the elders of the church of Ephesus; the heretics and heresiarchs, so often mentioned in the Epistles both of St. Paul and of St. Peter; the particular instances of Hymenæus, Philegellus, Hermogenes, Philetus, Diotrephes^a; the woman Jezebel mentioned in the Revelation^r; the Nicolaitans^s; Cerinthus; Ebion; and many more—all of whom come within the limits of the first century, and the lifetime of some one or other of the apostles; are sufficient to intimate how far and wide not merely the tares in general, but the rankest and most luxuriant of the roots of bitterness, under the diligent culture and dissemination of the enemy of souls, at a very early period not only got admission into the church, but well nigh overspread and overran it.

It was a consequence of the introduction of the zizan, after it had once taken place, that from thenceforward the field which before contained only one sort of grain, came to contain two; and not only to contain, but to retain them both: and it was likewise a consequence of the rise of false, among the true professors of Christianity, once begun, that the congregation of the visible church became divisible, and has ever since been divisible, into the good and the bad, the real and nominal, in the same complex of professing believers.

^a 1 Tim. i. 20: 2 Tim. ii. 17. i. 15. 3 John 9.

^r Rev. ii. 20.

^s Ch. ii. 6. 15.

The introduction of the zizan was a work of stealth, and executed at a time when the personal agency of its author could not be observed or detected. Nor is the actual part discharged by the enemy of God, even in those effects which are most peculiarly his, overt, but concealed. And as to the specific instance of his agency in bringing about the first rise of corruptions in the church, and the mixture of false and pretended Christians among real and sincere—the progress of corruption is naturally slow, and silent, and for a while imperceptible: and if even nominal or merely professing Christians, to all outward appearance would resemble the true, by what means, but that of time, could they be distinguished from them?

It was a consequence of this concealment of the enemy's personal agency, that the servants of the owner, though they had the charge of their master's field, were not accountable for the injury done to it, by his act: and it is a consequence of the personal and yet the imperceptible working of Satan, in perverting the orthodoxy of Christian faith, and corrupting the integrity of Christian practice, that though the ministers of religion are the acknowledged guardians of both, they are not responsible for the injury which is done to either: they are bound to oppose these corruptions, and to struggle against them to the utmost of their ability; but in whatever degree they take effect, in spite of their opposition and remonstrances, their success must be attributed to Satan, or to the instruments of Satan; and can no more be charged upon the ministers of religion, than upon their Master, Jesus Christ.

The first sensible distinction between the good grain and the bad, was the difference of the flower and the fruits of each. The scriptural sense of the metaphor of fruits, as applied to moral agents, and intended to designate the quality of their actions, is the conformity of the external conduct to the springs and motives of action within. All actions are necessarily the result of principles, (especially all such actions as constitute *conduct*, that is, are *habitual*, and so far determine the character—) and therefore the nature of the principles determines the nature of the actions; just as the virtue or quality of a tree determines the virtue or quality of its fruit. Such is the analogy between these things, that the metaphor which speaks of men's lives and conversation as the *fruit* of their principles, is not more beautiful than obvious, nor more obvious than just and appropriate. The discovery of effects in their causes, whether moral or physical, is the privilege of Omniscience only; but the inference of causes from their effects is the legitimate province of human sagacity, and comes within the compass of human penetration, assisted by human experience. Principles and springs of conduct, which lie deep in the heart, we cannot fathom, so as to foresee how they will operate on the conduct—but actions lie open to our observation; and as all effects must have their causes, it is possible to infer from our acquaintance with the effect, what is the nature of the cause which has produced it.

The moral characters, then, denoted by the bad grain, are nominal Christians, whose lives and conduct do not habitually accord with the principles of their Christian profession, but are still habitually

regulated by some principles of their own: whose lives and conduct, therefore, being the genuine result of such principles, are the best indication of the nature of the principles themselves. A tree possessing an intrinsically noxious quality, will not bring forth wholesome fruit; nor a sound, and healthy, and wholesome tree give birth to a noxious, a poisonous, a degenerate and inferior fruit. Neither will an unsound and vicious Christian principle be exemplified in the fruits of an holy and religious life; nor a sound and virtuous Christian disposition in an immoral or worldly practice. The good grain in the parable, or the inheritors of the kingdom, are they whose lives do not belie their Christian calling: the bad, as the planting of the enemy of Christ, are all, whose lives are habitually at variance with their profession. The former are actuated of course, on principle, by Christian motives; the latter by reasons and motives, whatever they may be in themselves and however different from each other, yet all opposed to the spirit of the gospel; and so far, antichristian in common.

The discovery of the existence of the zizan in the field of their master was naturally ascribed to his servants: and the first observation, whether of the corruptions of Christian doctrine, or of the deficiencies of Christian practice, may well be supposed to belong to the ministers of religion; whose business it properly is to watch over the purity of faith, and to enforce the consistency of conduct, which become every nominal member of the same communion of the church. The discovery of the zizan excited the wonder of the servants, until they were informed of its cause: and had not scripture revealed to us,

to what extent the production of evil of every kind, and especially of such evil as the perversion of scriptural truth and the depravation of Christian practice, was to be ascribed to the agency of Satan in particular, it would not have been easy for any, and much more for the ministers of religion, to account for these effects. The ministers of religion, by their office, their employments, their studies, are, or ought to be, the fittest judges of the intrinsic excellence of the Christian religion, and what should be its natural results in practice. And to them it may well appear the most extraordinary of phenomenons, that a dispensation so perfect in its revelation, so clear in its proofs, so powerful in its motives, so well calculated both to instruct mankind in the knowledge of their duty, and to assist them in its performance, should fail of its legitimate effect; and instead of enlightening, reforming, quickening, and sanctifying its subjects, be abused, as it often is, to the means of error, delusion, profaneness, and immorality.

The discovery of the tares, in the midst of their master's wheat, could not fail to excite a wish in the minds of honest and faithful servants, to see them, if possible, removed: nor can any good and sincere minister of the gospel behold without concern, the many fatal corruptions of faith and doctrine, which contaminate the purity of evangelical truth, or the glaring discrepancy which experience shews to exist between the lives of so many nominal Christians, and the simplicity of the gospel character: nor if by any lawful and reasonable means, so desirable a change might be brought to pass, as the removal of this great scandal on religion in general, and on the Christian religion in particular—is it to be doubted

that he would gladly see it take effect, and willingly cooperate towards it.

But the discovery of the zizan was made too late to allow of their extirpation, at the time, with safety to the wheat; which was not yet ripe enough for the harvest, yet too forward to be disturbed in the ground. It appears from the sequel, that the proposed extermination of the zizan, and the reaping and ingathering of the wheat, are the process of judgment at the end of the world, which is to succeed upon the state of probation, and to usher in the state of retribution, to the respective subjects of each. It is consequently implied hereby, that the true reason why the wicked are not destroyed in the present life, is that the process of judgment cannot begin in the present life; and the process of judgment cannot begin in the present life, because the effect proposed by the scheme of probation is progressive, and will not be complete until after the lapse of an appointed period or duration, coextensive with that of the present state of things. The scheme of probation, on Christian principles, is something transacted in the present life, for an end and purpose which would still be the same, and could be accomplished only in time, though the good existed by themselves, without any admixture of the bad. Had the good grain, which was originally sown by itself, continued ever after to grow by itself, still its arrival at maturity must have been gradually accomplished, by passing through the stages of the same natural process, between the sowing and reaping of the same crop of corn. The scheme of probation is progressive, because the children of the kingdom, the destined heirs of immortality, are suc-

cessively subjected to it; that is, they are individually brought into being, to pass their term of trial in the present world—they do not all exist, nor all undergo their probation, at once. When the appointed number of the heirs of immortality is full, the œconomy of probation will be at an end; just as when all the seed committed to a field is matured, the time of its growing is over, and the period of its being cut down and gathered into barns, is at hand. The judgment of the wicked, then, cannot begin during the continuance of the present state of things, because neither can the acceptance, or rewarding of the good; and neither can these begin in the present life, because so long as the present state of things continues, the scheme of probation, even as designed for the good, is not yet arrived at its consummation; the number of the heirs of immortality is not yet full.

It was a consequence of the discovery of the zizan, at such a point of time, that a toleration was granted to them even after their discovery, and with the consent of the owner himself: and it is a consequence of the present state of things, and of the end to which the scheme of probation is directed, that the bad, though known and discriminated as such, are yet allowed by the author of the scheme and the head of the church, to remain for the present in a state of impunity. Yet the toleration allowed to the zizan was only for a certain period of time; and while it lasted, was conceded solely for the sake of the wheat. Neither is the ultimate punishment of the wicked hereafter, more than suspended by their impunity in the present life; that so, their being brought to judgment at once, may

not interfere with the transaction and effect of the probation, appointed for the good; part of whose trial it is, that they must live in conjunction with the bad, and besides the other enemies of their salvation, be obliged to contend with the world, and with the seductive influence of evil example all around them.

It was the effect of the temporary toleration of the zizan, that they were deliberately left to go on growing along with the wheat; and it is the effect of the present impunity of its unworthy members, that the church must continue to possess the same mixture, and to exhibit the same contrast of nominal and real within its communion, to the end of its being; with no attempt prematurely, either on the part of Christ as its head, or of the ministers of religion as placed in authority under him, to separate them from each other. It was a consequence of the same toleration, that the zizan would proceed to mature their fruit, according to the tendency of their nature, just as much as the wheat: and it results from the impunity of the bad, in the midst of the good, in the present life, that they must go on to make their damnation, as the latter do their salvation, only the more sure, by persevering to the end.

But here a difficulty occurs, which it would not be proper to leave unexplained. The good grain, it must be obvious, under the circumstances of the case, could never become the bad; nor contrariwise, the bad, the good: and if they denote opposite divisions of Christians in the complex respectively, it would seem to be implied that the salvation of one of these classes, and the reprobation of the other, are equally necessary and inevitable.

This conclusion, which appears to result spontaneously from the state of the case in the parable, with proper limitations, may be very just and true. The doctrine of *particular* final perseverance, or *particular* final salvation, is indeed of a questionable kind; but that of a *general* final perseverance, and of a *general* final salvation, may be sound and unexceptionable. We can never, for instance, take it for granted that a certain individual shall finally persevere and be saved; but we may always assume that *some* or other will persevere to the end and be saved. A bad man, at one time, may repent at another and be saved; and a good man, at one time, may fall off at another and be lost: yet some bad men shall never repent, and some good men shall never fall away. And whosoever they may be, who shall finally persevere to salvation, or the contrary—that they should be known to God already, though his foreknowledge may exert no influence either on their salvation or on their reprobation—may reasonably be taken for granted.

We have only to suppose, then, that the complex of Christians, who shall ultimately persevere and be saved, are denoted by the good seed, as the destined heirs of the kingdom, and the complex of Christians who shall finally persevere and be lost, as the seed of the Devil, are denoted by the zizan; and the former will always have been the good seed, the latter always the bad. Nor is it to be imagined, that the representation in the parable, as answering to a real state of things in the church, was designed to apply to it at *some* particular period of its existence only, and not at all periods of it alike; nor consequently, to hold good of the distinction of

personal characters in the complex of the Christian society, at *some* one particular time, but not at all times alike.

When the season of harvest was arrived, the same motive which required the zizan to be spared previously, would require it to be destroyed at last; viz. the exclusive good of the wheat; which would be as much injured by being collected into barns along with the zizan, after it was ripe, as by being pulled up together with it, before it was ripe. In like manner, when the œconomy of probation designed for the trial of the good, has produced its full effect, and when the number of the heirs of salvation is now complete, the œconomy of retribution, which ushers in their reward and confirms their acceptance, must be ready to begin. But the particular reward of the good pre-supposes the separation and punishment of the bad. The same œconomy of retribution, therefore, which closes the state of probation to the one, by sealing and confirming their acceptance at last, must terminate the state of their impunity, and usher in the state of their reprobation to the other. When the preparatory discipline of the good, which was intended to make them worthy of their everlasting reward, is fully over, their reward itself, the covenanted right of their final perseverance, must in justice be due to them; and when the toleration of the bad is at an end, their impunity is at an end also. If they were tolerated for the sake of the good, in this present life, it follows as a natural consequence, that they must cease to be tolerated, they must be consigned to destruction, for the sake of the good also, in the next.

It was, therefore, with reason that the agency

of the same persons, who would always have been wanted to reap and gather in the wheat, was described as instrumental likewise in carrying into effect the sentence of excision upon the zizan: and it is certain that the angels, who answer to those reapers, are the appointed ministers whose office it will be, at the solemnity of the day of doom, to consummate the purposes of the divine justice, both in the previous separation, and in the ultimate disposal, of the righteous and of the wicked. Nor, if we may build any conclusion on the intimations of scripture, with respect to the order and course of proceedings at that solemnity, is even the last circumstance mentioned in the parable, the destruction of the zizan by fire before the collection of the wheat into barns—without a meaning. The bad may be brought before their judge, promiscuously with the good; and the bad may be tried at the same time, and with the same publicity, as the good: but the bad will be separated from the good either before, or during the trial of each; and the sentence of condemnation will be executed on the bad, before the sentence of acceptance is ratified unto the good. In other words, not until all scandals, and every worker of iniquity, shall first have been gathered together out of the dominions of Christ, and first have been visited with their condign punishment before the eyes of the good—shall the righteous begin to shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. And indeed, any other order of the event, in the different disposal of the heirs of salvation, and of the children of perdition respectively, would appear unnatural, and therefore not to be expected.

Lastly, by this result, and in consequence of such a separation of the component parts of the field from each other, the final end proposed by sowing it originally with only one kind of grain, and that the most appropriate, seemed to be successfully vindicated at last, however much it might have been obstructed before; for nothing but the wheat was ultimately to be received into the barns of the owner. And in like manner, the actual separation of the bad from the good, at the end of the period of probation, will realize the design originally proposed by the foundation of the visible church, preparatory to its transition into the invisible: and as the consequence of the final excision of the zizan, would be to leave the wheat by itself at the time of harvest, as completely as it was at the time of sowing, before the introduction of the bad grain; so must the separation of the members of the visible church, as it exists at present, from each other, in its effect upon the ultimate formation of the congregation of the invisible out of the complex of the visible church, be virtually the undoing of the previous state of things, and the correction of the anomaly which existed in this life. For by means of that final separation, none will become members of the invisible church, but the sincere and faithful part of the visible; and none, as we may take it for granted, but they, were ever intended, in the original constitution and design of the visible church, to become so.

Before I conclude my consideration of the present parable, there are still some general remarks, which I think it necessary to make upon it.

As first—in that part of the Introduction, which

treated of the millennium, this parable was mentioned among those, which would probably find their completion in some future process of judgment, preparatory to that dispensation^t. The truth of this supposition, I think, must appear, from the above review and explanation of its circumstances. The field which it speaks of, is the existing visible church; the grain of both sorts within that field, is the complex of professing Christians, which makes up the congregation of the church; the separation of the one from the other is the separation of the unworthy members of the same communion of Christ from the worthy. So far, then, as it represents an œconomy of probation, this is manifestly not a probation of moral agents in general, but of Christians in particular; and so far as it supposes an œconomy of retribution, arising out of it, it is a retribution applicable to the case not of moral agents in general, but of Christians in particular. Were the parable intended for the case of moral agents generally, the field must be strictly the world; or the Christian church must be strictly coextensive with the limits of the world. But this is not yet the case, nor probably ever will be, before the time of the millennium itself. If all mankind, however, are not concerned in the probation supposed by the parable, neither are they in the retribution; and a limited œconomy of either kind, respecting only a part of mankind, and those exclusively Christians, whether deserving of the name or not—may justly be presumed to be preparatory not to the kingdom of heaven, through all eternity, which is preceded by the general judgment, but to the millennium, which is

^t Introduction, chap. xii. p. 267. 269.

preceded by the resurrection and judgment of Jews, or of Christians, only; both agreeing in this respect, that they were alike the members, though at different times, of the same visible church.

Again, the parable supplies an answer to the objection sometimes made to Christianity, that it has not produced all the good which might have been expected from it; it has not had that practical influence on the lives of its nominal professors, which in its own nature it was calculated to produce. Now the parable shews, that so far as Christianity was designed to produce these effects, it has produced them; viz. upon the good seed in particular, or those who were the first, and are still the proper and legitimate, if not the exclusive, subjects of its discipline. As for all others, denoted by the zizan, who may nominally belong to the communion of the gospel; either it was not designed for them at all, or its failure to influence them is to be ascribed to a cause sufficient to account for that failure, known and described beforehand.

By way of analogy, it may supply an answer also to the more general question, which so much perplexed the philosophers of antiquity^u, *πόθεν τὸ κακὸν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, what was the origin of evil of any kind; as well as to the particular one, *πόθεν τὸ κακὸν ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, what was the origin of evil in the church. The first author of evil in the church may well be presumed to have been the first cause of moral evil in general.

^u The Stoics boldly denied the existence of what they could not account for: one of them, Epictetus, tells us, *Manuale*, cap. xxvii: *ὡσπερ σκοπὸς πρὸς τὸ ἀποτυχεῖν οὐ τίθεται· οὕτως οὐδὲ κακοῦ φύσις ἐν κόσμῳ γίνεται.*

The proposed extermination of the zizan from the wheat, implying only the destruction of the wicked at the day of doom, and having no regard to the infliction of temporal punishments; it follows, that the question how far mere immorality of conduct in professing Christians, at variance with the acknowledged obligations of their religion, or how far the pernicious doctrines of false teachers, are proper subjects for secular castigation, is not affected by the parable, but is either left exactly as it was, or is decided in the negative. To punish the wicked in this life, as universally as the influence of wickedness extends; though an infallible criterion might be possessed for distinguishing them from the good, and an indisputable authority might be pleaded in behalf of the attempt; would still be like exterminating the zizan from the almost full grown wheat; would be attended by the convulsion of families and nations, the disturbance of the peace of the world, the dissolution of society itself.

The parable of the tares differs from that of the sower, in the very particular in which it seems to resemble it most; the use of the common image of seed. The seed in the former instance was the word of God, in the present, it is the children of the kingdom; it stood for Christian doctrine before, it stands for Christian believers now. In other respects, there is some resemblance between them; as in the field, the servants of the owner, the Devil—which mean the same thing, or are alike concerned, in both. The tares of this parable too, in general, answer to the situations on the rock and among the thorns, in the other; and especially to the latter.

Lastly, the reason of the abrupt termination in

the narrative before alluded to, begins now to appear. It was designed to imply the continuance of the present state of things in the constitution of the visible church ; which, though repugnant to its first intention, and sometime to be rectified and come to an end, is yet destined to remain unaltered in the present life, and cannot expire until the expiration of the state of probation, and with that of the gospel dispensation itself.

PARABLE THIRD. ALLEGORICAL.

THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY.

MARK IV. 26—29.

HARMONY P. III. 17.

²⁶ And he said, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should have cast the seed upon the ground; ²⁷ and should go to sleep and rise up, by night and by day; and the seed should sprout and grow up, how he knoweth not himself. ²³ For the earth of her own accord beareth fruit; first a blade, then an ear, then full-grown grain in the ear. ²⁹ But when the fruit is ready, immediately he sendeth the sickle, because the reaping time is come."

THE order of the three minor parables, delivered in public, or as we have agreed to call them, of the three allegorical comparisons, is not unimportant to their respective meaning, and mutual connexion. And this order is ascertained by the concurrent testimony of St. Matthew and St. Mark; both of whom relate the second of the number; and so determine the place of the first, and the third.

In considering the first of the series, which is recorded exclusively by St. Mark, some verbal criticism is necessary by way of preliminary; which the reader I hope will excuse.

Mark iv. 28: the third verse of the comparison,

with reference to its position in the context, is manifestly parenthetic; and the object of the interpolation is to explain the words, which form the conclusion of the preceding verse. The grammatical construction of the twenty-ninth verse, proves this; both as connected with the preceding by a particle, which implies the resumption of a former subject, and because the verb "sendeth" (*ἀποστέλλει*), which stands there without a governing substantive, and by the usual rules of syntax would either be referred to the word, "fruit," (*καρπός*), just before, or to the word, "earth," (*γῆ*), in the twenty-eighth verse, is plainly to be referred to the word, "man," (*ἄνθρωπος*), in the twenty-sixth verse.

If, then, we set aside this one verse, the succession of images or circumstances, which constitutes the material history of the parable, and ascertains the specific object and drift of the comparison, is represented by the rest of the description. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should have cast the seed upon the ground; and should go to sleep and rise up, by night and by day; and the seed should sprout and grow up, how he knoweth not himself. But when the fruit is ready, immediately he sendeth the sickle, because the reaping time is come."

Upon this account, we may remark, first, that the word, which is rendered "the seed," should be understood of the crop or stock of seed; of all that was necessary, or all that was designed, to cover and replenish a certain field.

Secondly, that if we construe the tense which is translated in the authorized version, by "should cast," in strict conformity to the original, it will

mean, "should have cast;" that is, have done casting, have made an end of casting, the seed in question, upon the ground in question.

Thirdly, that in the allusion to sleeping and rising, which follows on the supposed termination of this process, the object is to describe a state of easiness and unconcern, transacted in the ordinary way of sleeping or resting by night, when men have nothing else to do, and waking or rising up again, to go about men's usual business, by day. But it is a state of easiness and unconcern about one thing only; viz. the progress of vegetation, between the sowing of the seed and the ripening of the fruit: and therefore it lasts only for the length of time between those extremes, and is produced by an indifference to nothing, except the nature and process of that œconomy which is going on meanwhile. Having committed his seed to the ground, and while he is still waiting for the crop, the man concerns himself no further about the result; but leaves the seed to take its own course to maturity, in the way appointed by the laws of nature. When, however, the intermediate process of vegetation is over, and the fruit is arrived at its perfection, the period of the man's indifference and inactivity is over also: his personal interference and agency are just as requisite at the end of the process, to reap and secure the crop, as they were at the beginning, to commit the seed to the ground.

The scope then of a description like this, which sets out with the *first* sowing of seed, and consequently *for* its natural end and purpose—yet conducts the result through the whole of the process, from the first springing up of the seed to the final

maturity of the fruit—is to oppose to each other, and to distinguish asunder, the several steps of progression, between the sowing of seed and the enjoyment of the crop, and the several species of agency, alike concerned, but at different stages of the process, in bringing about the joint effect. The nature of this effect is such that, under the circumstances of the case, one species of the agency which contributes to it, must be called the *external*, and the other, as opposed to that, the *internal*, concerned in the result. The joint effect of both being the end naturally proposed in committing seed to the ground, the possession and enjoyment of the ripe fruit—the external agency which contributes to bring it to pass, is that for which the owner depends upon himself; the internal not less concerned in the process, is that for which he depends upon something else.

The part attributed to the external agency, under the circumstances of the case, is twofold. First—all that part of the process which belongs to the sowing—or commission of the seed to the ground; and therefore includes not merely the act of dissemination, but whatsoever is necessary, before or after it, to its proper effect. For example, *before* the time of sowing—to know and discern when it is proper to sow, or to set about such an act; to make choice of a proper kind of seed; to select and prepare a proper kind of soil: and *at* the time of sowing—to cast and distribute the seed with skill and judgment, over the surface of the ground; to take care that it is properly covered in the earth; and that neither weeds, nor any other external impediment, which may be prevented by the foresight and

precautions of the husbandman, are suffered to interfere with the growth and well-being of the future plant.

Secondly—all that part of the process which concerns the gathering in and securing the crop; and whatsoever, in like manner, is necessarily connected with it; as first, *before* the reaping begins—to know and distinguish when it is proper to reap; that is, when the corn is fully ripe; and *at* the time of reaping—to provide proper persons to cut it down with due care and judgment, that none of the produce be impaired or wasted; and lastly, *after* it is reaped—to bestow it in barns and granaries, where it shall be securely laid up, in reserve for any use that may be made of it.

These two parts are the first and the last of the process, both alike distinct from, yet both alike necessary to that which goes on between them; the former, as doing every thing preparatory to the commencement of the intermediate œconomy, the latter, whatsoever is necessary, even after it is over, for the just, natural effect of its consummation. Without the first of these auxiliaries, the intermediate causes could not begin to operate at all; and without the last, they would have operated only in vain. Seed cannot mature its fruit, unless it be sown; but it will mature its fruit to no purpose, unless it be reaped. Both these parts of the process, then, are necessarily the work of external agency; for seed will neither sow nor reap itself: and in a given instance, or where the agency of some definite instrument is supposed to be concerned, this external agency is naturally that, either of the owner of the field, or of those whom he employs in his stead.

Again, the part not attributed to external agency, is all that part of the process, which begins where the external agency at one of the extremes, terminates, and goes on to where the external agency at the other, begins. These are the several stages of the springing, continued subsistence, and gradual ripening of the seed, after the sowing, but before the reaping; stages, which the parable, in the parenthetic verse above alluded to, expressed not less accurately than beautifully by the terms of this natural climax: "The earth of her own accord beareth fruit; first a blade, then an ear, then full-grown grain in the ear^a." Effects like these, we can ascribe to no cause but the natural principle of vegetation in the seed, or the natural vigour and nutritive power of the soil; and ascribe them to which we may, the operation of a cause, which resides in the seed or in the ground, must be called the *internal* agency concerned in the result, just as much as that of causes, which resided in something distinct from both, was to be denominated the *external*. And these two kinds of agency are not only plainly

^a Clemens Rom. i. ad Cor. 23: ὁ ἀνόητοι, συμβάλετε ἑαυτοὺς ξύλω, λάβετε ἄμπελον· πρῶτον μὲν φυλλοροεῖ, εἶτα βλαστὸς γίνεται, εἶτα φύλλον, εἶτα ἄνθος, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ὄμφαξ, εἶτα σταφυλὴ παρεστηκυῖα. The same description occurs again, Ep. ii. cap. 14.

Cicero de Senectute, 15: Quamquam me quidem non fructus modo, sed etiam ipsius terræ vis ac natura delectat: quæ, cum gremio mollito ac subacto semen sparsum excepit, primum, occæcatum cohibet . . . deinde, tepefactum vapore et compressu suo diffundit, et elicit herbescentem ex eo viriditatem: quæ, nixa fibris stirpium, sensim adolescit, culmoque erecta geniculato, vaginis jam quasi pubescens includitur; e quibus cum emerit, fundit frugem spici, ordine structam, et contra avium minorum morsus munitur vallo aristarum.

opposed to each other, but are actually discriminated by a number of characteristic differences; which I shall proceed to point out.

The external agency is something confined to the two extremes of the process; the internal is something which extends throughout it, between them. The one then, is necessary only at first and at last: the other, at all times in the course of the process.

The external agency is something soon transacted, and once for all: the internal, requires time and space. The business of sowing and of reaping both, is speedily to be accomplished, and restricted to two opposite points of the year: the process of maturing the crop is slow and gradual; occupying in all kinds of grain a considerable part of the year, and in some, nearly the whole.

The external agency at each of the extremes, is not more for the sake of the seed, than for that of the owner: the internal is solely for the sake of the seed. The end of the one then, is not one and the same, in every point of view; that of the other, is.

The external agency, though directed to the production of a distinct effect at either extreme, is still restricted to a definite result at each: the internal, considered as the author of an effect extending from the one to the other, is the cause of a result which is perpetually varying. The process of sowing the seed, and that of reaping the fruit, are each of them single and uniform: but the process of vegetation, by which the seed is carried forward from the first appearance of the sprout, to the mature and perfect fruit, is not only gradual and successive, but in its effects at one time, is visibly distinguished from its effects at another.

The external agency, both in its causes and in its effects at each extreme, is something perceptible to the senses: the internal, all throughout, is something insensible in its causes, sensible only in its effects. The parable itself implied this, when after supposing the process of sowing to be over, it described the process of vegetation as beginning, and as carried on, "how the man himself knew not;" who yet was able to see it going forward, and to judge of its operation as it proceeded. A natural process may not be altogether independent of human assistance; yet the part which is discharged by nature, as soon as the furtherance of the process is left with her, necessarily escapes our observation. The machinery by which nature works, or the mode by which she accommodates causes to their effects, is too subtle for human sagacity to penetrate, or for the human senses to apprehend: so that though we know from experience, the effects that will result, we cannot explain the agency by which they are brought to pass. A grain of corn, committed to the ground by the hand of man, will sprout and shoot; the shoot will disclose the stem; the stem the ear, and the ear the fruit: and were the most illiterate and unphilosophical person to be asked why all this should necessarily follow, from the mere act of burying a seed in the earth, he might be disposed to laugh at the apparent simplicity of the question. Yet no human wisdom was ever able to return the answer to this question—no human sagacity ever yet could penetrate into the true causes of this effect; and no human knowledge, upon such subjects, has ever gone further than the merely discovering, by a regular and constant experience, that

such and such consequences will uniformly follow from such and such previous acts.

The external agency is only *accidentally* instrumental to the proposed result of the process; the internal is the *true efficient* cause of it. The skill and industry of man may distinguish the proper time to sow and to reap; may choose the seed; prepare the soil; commit the grain to the ground; cover it there; foster and protect its growth; cut down its ripened produce; house and bestow it in barns: but the operation of natural causes both raises the seed from the ground, and matures the crop. The part of man is merely to lay a train, and set it in motion; and then to sit by, and watch its effects: the part of nature is to take up the process where man leaves it, and carry it to its desired result: and what nature accomplishes, she accomplishes by a mechanism of her own contrivance, and by a mode of action exclusively her own.

That principle of life, which before the reception of the seed into the ground, lay dormant within it, but as soon as it is committed to the soil, and subjected to the action of its stimulating influence, instinctively causes it to burst from concealment; the unerring discrimination in the effects of its first natural impulse, which sends the root downwards, and the blade upwards; the provision of fibres for the one, to enable it to take up its proper nourishment from the ground, and of an alimentary channel for the other, by which the nourishment is circulated through the veins of the plant, and distributed in just proportions to every part; the providential care from without, which controls the elements to favour its growth, and tempers the supplies of rains

and dews," of light and warmth, to the necessities of vegetable life; the gradual protrusion of the stalk, emerging at the proper time, and carrying with it the embryo ear; the expansion of the bud from its green womb, when its milky veins are become too rife to be any longer compressed within the capsule; the delicate fringing and embroidery of flowers, which adorn the ear on every side; the curious mechanism and sympathy of parts, which carry on the process of fructification within them; the residual seed, enveloped in its rough and bearded husk, when the flower has passed away; the kindly influence of the summer's sun, which hardens the tender and succulent ear, matures and perfects the half-formed substance of the grain, and gives strength and solidity to the straw or stalk: all these, and more than these, are but successive parts of the œconomy of vegetation, in ripening the fruit of corn—and with none of these has man, or the agency of man, any thing to do.

Lastly, the external agency is the agency of man, but the internal, is the agency of God; for it is the agency of nature—and the agency of nature is the agency of God. On all these accounts, the external agency must be pronounced comparatively mean, dependent, incomplete; the internal only, dignified, independent, and perfect.

We may conclude, then, that the direct object of the comparison, is to oppose the part which is performed by external agency, in a certain process, to that which depends on the internal—with a view, more particularly, to shew the greater importance and superiority of the latter: and therefore, that while the consideration of the former is not to be

excluded from the scope of its description, the efficacy of the latter is the thing to be principally attended to.

THE MORAL.

The declared object of comparison with the circumstances of the parabolic history, in this instance, as well as in the last, is the kingdom of God, that is the kingdom of heaven—to be understood, no doubt, in some one or other of the senses of that phrase, as explained elsewhere in reference to the gospel dispensation. And from the generic resemblance of the groundwork of the material representation in the present instance, to that which is the basis of the two preceding parables, so far as they all turn on a process of sowing; and from the particular resemblance between the subject matter of this parable and that of the last, so far as they both relate to a process of sowing, preparatory to the ripening and ingathering of one and the same crop of seed; the conclusions which have been ascertained, respecting the meaning of these images in the two former instances, and especially in the latter, may justly be applied to the illustration of the present parable. It may be presumed, therefore, that the object of the comparison, in this instance as well as in the last, is something which concerns the gospel dispensation, in the sense of the existing visible church.

The three parts of the process, then, which were observed to carry on the œconomy of the material description in the parable, considered as subservient to one effect—the raising, maturing, and enjoying the produce of a field of corn—must answer to so many parts of a similar process with regard to the

œconomy of the existing visible church ; which may be stated and explained as follows.

The business of sowing the grain, which is prior even to the vegetation of the seed, denotes the first formation of this church, without which it could not even have a being. The springing up, continuance, and arrival at maturity of the grain, when sown, which is the process preparatory to the reaping of the fruit, represent the growth, perpetuity, and increase of the visible church, according to the original design of its constitution, between its first formation and its ultimate consummation. The reaping and ingathering of the crop, which follow on the maturity of the fruit, and carry into effect the end proposed by the sowing at first, describe the œconomy of retribution which will ensue upon the close of the œconomy of probation, and precede the transition of the visible into the invisible church.

The moral of the comparison, therefore, between the subject matter of the parable and its counterpart the kingdom of heaven, is to shew, what part of the gospel dispensation, in carrying on the scheme of probation from first to last, should be due to *external* agency, and what part should not : viz. the first formation of the visible church, and the final transition of the visible into the invisible, to *external* agency ; but the intermediate subsistence of the visible church, between these extremes—the continued integrity, maintenance, and accomplishment of the Christian scheme—to an *internal* agency of some kind or other.

Considered as so contrasted in their nature and purposes respectively—the external agency concerned in the production of the common result, with re-

gard to the first part of the process, may well be the agency of the instruments employed in the first propagation of the gospel; and with respect to the last, may be that of the instruments by whom the final transition of the visible into the invisible church, will be carried into effect; but the internal agency, or that which concerns the intermediate part of the process, can be nothing which does not reside in the gospel itself, or flow directly from the very nature, genius, and constitution of such a dispensation, as the Christian.

I shall proceed accordingly to shew that the external agency in the first of these instances, denotes the instrumentality of the apostles, in the second, that of the angels; but the internal agency, or that which was due to some natural cause and principle, inherent in the seed, or the ground, or both, describes, in one word, the Intrinsic Vitality of the Christian Religion, and the Tutelary Providence of God; which when the religion had once been brought into being and established, for its proper end and purpose, should conspire to keep it in being, until that end and purpose were accomplished.

THE INTERPRETATION.

First, then; that the dispensation of the gospel was begun and executed by means of instruments; that as far as the ministration of these instruments might be compared to a process of sowing, the ministers or instruments themselves might be represented by the character of sowers, the word committed to their dispensation, or the converts whom they made, might be compared to the seed, the countries in which they preached, the societies out of

which they acquired their converts, might be adumbrated by the field which contained the grain, or by the grain which was planted in the field; that these instruments were the apostles, and the other evangelists of the gospel; that as employed in their capacity of such instruments, they were commissioned and employed by Jesus Christ, the owner of the Christian field, the proprietor of the Christian harvest, the head of the visible church; that by their means, Christian churches were founded, and Christian societies were formed, among all nations; that their instrumentality in the service of the gospel dispensation, compared with the other causes which cooperated to its success, was purely *external*; that they did not set about their work, until the fulness of time was come, and the moral and political situation of the world was the most advantageous for the result; that they were endued with competent knowledge and ability from on high; that the word committed to their trust, was the very and eternal counsel of God; that they taught it with zeal, prudence, and fidelity; that they diffused every where the same pure, and genuine, and unadulterated form of Christianity; that they neither introduced nor tolerated abuses or corruptions, either of faith, or of discipline, or of practice; that the effect of their agency and ministration was the first foundation of the existing visible church, and the commencement of an œconomy of moral probation, on principles purely Christian;—these are points, upon which we enlarged sufficiently in the preceding parables; and being admitted they are abundantly competent to answer the conditions of that part of the external agency, in the present instance, which con-

cerned merely the beginning (and nothing more) of such a process, as the sowing, the springing, the ripening, the reaping and enjoying the produce of seed, committed to the field.

Again; that the existence of the visible church, and the continuance of the state of moral probation coexistent with it, are not designed to be perpetual; that the visible is sometime to pass into the invisible, and the œconomy of probation to be succeeded by the œconomy of retribution; that all the moral and responsible agents who have been subjected to the former, will have their proper share of good or evil awarded to them in the latter; that all will be congregated before the judgment seat of Christ; that the agency of certain proper instruments will be employed for this purpose, and therefore by Jesus Christ, in his capacity of the head of the church and the author of the scheme of probation itself; that these ministers are the angels; that their agency in carrying into effect the final result of the scheme of probation must be just as *external*, as that of the apostles in bringing it into being; that so far as the intermediate duration of the œconomy of probation is metaphorically to be compared to the natural intermediate process, which goes on between the sowing and ripening of a field of corn, the final result of that œconomy may be denoted by the reaping and ingathering of the crop; that the relative character of the instruments employed on it, will consequently be that of reapers; that the time of this consummation, however unknown to us, is something determinate in itself, which will neither be anticipated before the proper period, nor procrastinated after its arrival: these also are points

which have been established elsewhere, or which the testimony of the preceding parable in particular renders presumptively to be expected; and these, being so stated, are competent to supply the counterpart of that other member of the external agency, which concerned the third and last part of the process, between the first sowing of a field of corn and the ultimate enjoyment of the crop; the reaping and securing of the produce.

Let us now consider the *internal* agency, to which the second or intermediate part of the process, was seen to be due: the springing, subsisting, and by degrees maturing of the fruit. It is certain, that the gospel dispensation had its beginning; and we may take it for granted that it will have its end. There was once a time when no such œconomy of moral probation as the Christian, as yet existed—and there must again be a time when even this œconomy shall have ceased to exist; for it is essential to every œconomy of probation, as such, to be temporary, and ultimately to be succeeded by a contrary œconomy of retribution.

The two extreme points, however, in the duration of the Christian scheme, are not contiguous, and there is, consequently, an interval of greater or less extent, between its proper commencement, and what is destined to be its final consummation; an interval of finite magnitude, and occupied while it lasts, by the continued existence of the Christian religion, as professed in the visible church. Now the being and subsistence of a religion, which began at one extreme of a certain definite interval of time, and must continue until the other, cannot but be due to some proper cause. The beginning of the gospel dispen-

sation might be the effect of extraordinary means, and its consummation may be the effect of the same; but the continuance, integrity, and perpetuity of the established order of things, meanwhile, must for this very reason alone—because it was brought into being after an extraordinary manner, and because it may be brought to an end in an equally extraordinary way—be the effect of ordinary. A regular, established, and settled course of things, cannot be the effect of causes which are not equally definite, settled, and uniform.

The cause which must be supposed to produce this effect, was adumbrated in the parabolic comparison, by the principle of the *internal* agency; and therefore to agree with that, it must be some cause which begins to work at first, where the external has ceased for a time, and ceases to work at last, where the external is to begin again; which goes on uninterruptedly between these two extreme points; whose efficacy is derived immediately from the subject itself, independent of foreign aid or cooperation, further than relates to the control of merely external circumstances, in favour of its action; which acts gradually and in process of time, to distinguish it from any other cause that produces its effect at once; which acts solely *upon*, and *for*, the subject, and not for any thing else as much as for that; which produces results not simple and uniform at every stage of the process, but perpetually varying in the parts, identical and determinate only in the whole; whose proper effect is consequently that which is produced at the end of all; which is secret and insensible in the mode of its action, open and perceptible merely in the results; which is the sole

efficient cause of the effect, compared with which any other concerned in it likewise, is accidental, preparatory, or secondary; which must be eminently attributed to some divine, and not to any human agency; and on all these accounts is by far the most noble, important, and characteristic of the process of any.

All these criterions and descriptions of the cause in question, will accord to no counterpart, so well as to the Intrinsic Vitality of the Christian Religion, and the Tutelary Providence exerted in its behalf.

By the intrinsic vitality of the religion, I understand its adaptation and tendency, when once established, to continue in being, from the influence and operation of causes entirely dependent upon and derived from itself: and by the tutelary providence exerted in its behalf, its continued immunity from any principle of destruction not inherent in itself, to which it might be liable from its connexion with external circumstances, unless those were to be controlled in its favour. The first of these safeguards the religion would owe to itself; and the second, to the care and protection of God. By the one it would be secured against all danger to its safety from within; and by the other, against all risks to its well-being from without. But that state of things, which can be shaken, disturbed, or endangered, neither from within nor from without—which is secure against external violence and not liable to perish of itself—must be constituted for perpetuity, and possess an essential vitality; cannot, at least, cease to exist, until it has attained to what was always the end and design of its being.

Before the Christian church was yet founded, we find our Lord predicting to his apostles, that he would build it upon the rock or groundwork of their ministry; and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it^b: in which prediction it was implied that, though it must encounter many fierce assaults from the powers of darkness, it should surmount and triumph over them all. At a subsequent period, he declared to the unbelieving Jews, and to their leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees, that the stone which the builders rejected as naught, was become the head of the corner; and whosoever should fall on that stone should be dashed to pieces—but on whomsoever the stone should fall, it should grind him to powder^c: which also implied the futurity of many attacks upon Christianity, at various periods of its existence, but the certain miscarriage of all; and the penal retribution, (nothing less than their utter extermination,) which should redound upon the heads of its adversaries, in resentment of their very attempts.

The presence of the Holy Ghost, that is, of the Comforter, whose personal agency in the progressive completion of the Christian scheme, begins with the day of the first promulgation of the religion—it was promised should never be withdrawn from the disciples of Christ^d; and in the last conversation with the apostles recorded by St. Matthew, the presence, cooperation, and protection of Christ himself are similarly promised to attend upon them. “Lo! I am

^b Matt. xvi. 18.

^c Harm. P. iv. 68. Matt. xxi. 42—44. Mark xii. 10. Luke xx. 17, 18.

^d John xiv. 16—18. 26. Cf. xv. 26. xvi. 7.

“with you always,” (literally *all the days*,) “even to the end of the world;” or as we may render it here also, “to the end of the period of ages^c.”

The terms in which this promise was conveyed, shew it to be meant of a continuity of the presence and cooperation of Christ with his disciples, after he was personally removed from their society as much as while he was still with them. For it is not expressed, “I *shall be* with you always;” but, “I *am* with you always:” that is, it is so expressed as to imply, that he was at all times alike to be present with them; there should be no time when he would not be equally present; no time, when the perpetuity of his presence could even for a moment be said to be interrupted, whether he was visibly in their society or not. Nor is this promise to be restricted to his presence with the apostles, or with the early Christian church: for it follows on the command to “Go, teach all nations;” that is, to establish the church every where—and his presence is pledged to continue even to the end of the period—that is, to the appointed close and consummation of the gospel dispensation itself, far beyond the lifetime of its original instruments and ministers. It was given to the apostles as the representatives of the future Christian church; and it was intended for the benefit and assurance of succeeding generations of Christians, as well as for those of the first.

The tutelary providence of its Author, then, was pledged from the first to attend upon his religion; and without any reference to the proof of the fact of such a promise, from the fulfilment—it would be absurd to suppose that the protection of his providence

^c Matt. xxviii. 20. Harm. P. v. 12.

was not eminently to be exerted in its behalf. If the direction of the course of human affairs belongs to this providence, no doubt they are all rendered subservient to its own purposes, and all constrained to work together for the furtherance and success of its own dispensations. Nor was it less to be expected, *a priori*, that the agency of subordinate or secondary causes, would be made instrumental to the well-being and perpetuity of the gospel dispensation, after it began; than that the course of external circumstances should be purposely so regulated to prepare the way for its disclosure, as in the history of the world and of the divine proceedings, before the birth of Christ, we see it to have been.

The religion of Jesus Christ has subsisted in its present state, nearly two thousand years; or if we extend the term of its being as far back as the origin of the Mosaic dispensation, from which the Christian differs only as a complete and finished, from a rude and elementary form of the same kind of scheme; for nearly four. It has been exposed, in the course of this time, to numerous dangers: it has been attacked by adversaries of every description, and in modes and shapes of hostility, the most various. Plots have been deeply laid and systematically conducted, with a view to its destruction: all that malice could suggest, subtlety could contrive, and power could execute, has been attempted against it. It has suffered from false friends, as well as from open enemies; heresies have corrupted the purity of its faith, schisms have distracted the unity of its members; the lives of its nominal professors have never invariably accorded with their duties and obligations, nor done justice to the intrinsic excellence and

natural tendencies of the religion itself. It has travelled in the course of its progress, through chequered and eventful periods; it has had to pass through the storm and cloud, as well as the sunshine and calm; it has known dark and turbulent, as well as enlightened and tranquil ages. It has witnessed the downfall and rise of nations; the extinction and succession of empires, one after another. It has existed under every form and habit of social life; it has had to contend in succession with states of being the most different in themselves, yet all equally pregnant with mischief to its own integrity and continuity: it has been exposed at the same time to the corruptions of refinement, and to the grossness of barbarism. Yet notwithstanding all this, the Christian religion still survives, and its vitality is as great as ever. It is no other dispensation now, than it was at first; it is directed to no other end and purpose, at present, than it always was: though it may, possibly, be much nearer to the attainment of that end now, than it was, or could have been, at first.

If we compare the past and the present extent of the Christian religion, with the poor and unpromising aspect of its first commencement; if its continued existence at the end of two thousand years, is contrasted with the very great probability which there was, humanly speaking, that it never would have surmounted the first obstacles opposed to its birth; we shall be obliged to confess that there must have been something in its own nature, adapted for perpetuity: something in its claims to attention, intrinsically powerful and convincing. The force of this contrast is not diminished, if we reflect that the first, the most rapid, and as com-

pared with the apparent feebleness and inadequacy of the means, by which it was brought to pass, the most disproportionate, effect in its diffusion and establishment, was accomplished within the natural lifetime of any one of its original ministers. There was no proper infancy of the gospel; it arrived at maturity almost as soon as it began to be—like Minerva, starting from the head of Jupiter. The existence of Christianity became speedily as much a matter of course, as now; and the effect of the same causes, which preserve it in being still.

Nor is it any objection, that extraordinary means, or causes of a supernatural kind, were employed to bring it into being at first, but ordinary ones, or causes not to be distinguished from natural, have been appointed to keep it in existence since. To preserve in being even what before was not, until it was created; or to form it so at first, that it shall preserve itself ever after; is not a less stupendous exertion of divine power and wisdom, than the original production of things out of nothing. Human power and ingenuity may partially emulate even the divine, by giving to external nature many rare and wonderful forms; but the human agency falls infinitely short of the divine, in giving the attribute of durability to its productions. A watch is a curious and admirable piece of mechanism: but it would be much more so, if it could be contrived to repair or regulate itself, and especially, if to give birth to a watch like itself. The most delicate conceptions of art; the most exquisite of its productions—are commonly the most perishable; and in proportion to their durability is generally their rudeness. But even the most solid and lasting exist only for a

limited time ; and moulder away at length into the same nothingness, as their authors before them.

Extraordinary means, or an act of creative omnipotence, were employed for the production of the universe ; but ordinary means, or what is called the course of nature, have been appointed to serve for its continuance and perpetuity, as produced. On the principle of analogy, though extraordinary means might be resorted to for the original diffusion of Christianity, yet causes, dependent on the religion itself, and derived from its own genius and constitution, we should have expected would be employed to keep it in being ever after. The supernatural powers with which the original emissaries of the gospel were endowed, were necessary for its promulgation and reception at first ; but when the religion had taken root in the world, and like a young and healthy plant, favoured by its own vegetative energy, and the kindly influences of a congenial soil and climate, was now capable of flourishing, and supporting itself ; it is to be presumed, that they would be gradually withdrawn, or very much curtailed and diminished. Since that time, the support, continuance, and well-being of the gospel and the gospel scheme, under the tutelary aid and control of the divine Providence, have been left to the natural evidences, and the natural recommendations, of the religion—which, in whatever degree they contribute to produce this effect, I call by the common name of its **INTRINSIC VITALITY**.

The evidences, indeed, of Christianity are many and diverse. The truth of our religion, like the fabric of some well proportioned and well constructed edifice, rests not on one, but on a number of sup-

ports: and the proper symmetry or beauty, the solidity or strength of the building, as in the noblest and most complete of the conceptions of the art of architecture, reside not in any single part, however perfect, but in the relative proportions, the correspondence and harmony, the joint effect, the mutual aid and cooperation, of all the parts that make up the structure.

Each of these evidences, no doubt, is calculated to contribute its share, to the recommendations which adorn and enforce the gospel profession: but there may be some, to deserve the name of the intrinsic vitality, the natural energy and convincingness, of the Christian religion, more than others. These seem to be, in an eminent degree, what are usually called the *internal*, in opposition to the *external*, evidences of the gospel: evidences, which flow directly from the revelations, the doctrines, the precepts, and therefore, the internal constitution, of the religion itself. The effect which these produce, is upon the instincts and sympathies of our moral nature; they are arguments addressed to our feelings, as much as to our understandings; the force of which we apprehend intuitively, rather than deliberately, and are assured of by our consciences, as soon as by our reason. They satisfy us of the divine origin of the religion, by making us experimentally sensible of its being fit for ourselves, and worthy alike of its author, and of those for whom it is intended; as neither above, nor below their capacities; neither more, nor less than their exigencies; but so nicely proportioned to their wants and necessities, their powers and infirmities—as to convince us instinctively, that it is the revelation of the Au-

thor of nature, expressly designed for the benefit of his own moral creatures, and exactly accommodated to their present moral state, as neither better nor worse than it actually is: the truth in which respect, and what is best adapted to it, none can understand so well as our Maker.

The external evidences of Christianity, more especially the evidence of its miracles, as transmitted down to us by accredited testimony; and that of its prophecies, as already fulfilled, or as even now fulfilling before our eyes—only prepare the way for these; the superiority of which to either of the other two, may be judged of from this single consideration, that fully to comprehend, and much more, to feel these, a man must be a Christian already. The former are proper to convince the infidel, or to satisfy the first inquirer; but the latter are the source of unspeakable comfort, assurance, and satisfaction, even to the believer. It is of these we may suppose our Saviour to have spoken, when he said; “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself^a.” By these, when Christianity ceased to astonish in the earthquake and in the whirlwind, she continued to speak in the *still small voice*. The blaze of supernatural splendour, in the midst of which she was born and ushered into the world, when viewed at this distance, seems to become dim, and cannot be distinguished in all the primitive effulgence of its divine power and majesty. But the calm and steady lustre, which is still reflected by the light of *these* evidences, on the pages of the gospel, remains as bright and unsullied as ever; like

^a John vii. 17.

the fire upon the altar of burnt offering, which being once kindled from heaven, was never afterwards suffered to go out, and met the ministering priest on his first entrance into the courts of the Lord; or like the unextinguished flames of the sevenfold candlestick, burning within the tabernacle, and ever at hand to guide his approach to the oracle of the sanctuary, and to usher him into the presence of God himself.

PARABLE FOURTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE MUSTARD SEED.

MATTHEW XIII. 31, 32. MARK IV. 30—32.

HARMONY, P. III. 17.

CF. LUKE XIII. 18, 19. HARMONY, P. IV. 35.

MATTHEW xiii. 31, 32.

31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, “ The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field : 32 which is less indeed than all the seeds : but when it is grown up, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the fowls of heaven come and lodge in its branches.”

MARK iv. 30—32.

30 And he said, “ To what should we liken the kingdom of God, or with what sort of comparison should we compare it ? 31 *We should liken it* as to a grain of mustard seed, which when it hath been sown on the ground, is less than all the seeds, that are on the ground : 32 and when it hath been sown, it mounteth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and maketh great branches ; so that the fowls of heaven are able to lodge under the shadow of it.”

LUKE xiii. 18, 19.

18 And he said, “ To what is the kingdom of God like ? and to what shall I liken it ? 19 It is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his garden ; and it grew up, and became as a great tree, and the fowls of heaven lodged in the branches of it.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT is a striking, and no doubt, a significant peculiarity in the subject matter of the present parable, that it turns upon the history of *one* grain of mustard seed; that is, it selects and proposes as the object of comparison to the kingdom of heaven, a single specimen of the smallest of seeds. It is not less remarkable, that this solitary instance of one of the most insignificant objects in nature, is supposed to be taken at random, and cast into the field or garden, which receives it, with little or no solicitude, on the part of the agent to whom the act is attributed, what may become of it there; whether it should take root and flourish, or miscarry and perish. When we consider the consequences which follow on this apparently fortuitous act, and how great a tree is ultimately developed from so small a beginning, the effect must appear so much the more unexpected; the native vigour and expansibility of the seed, notwithstanding its own minuteness, and notwithstanding the untoward circumstances of its situation, must be so much the more forcibly represented.

In a comparison consisting of so few circumstances, as this does, it requires no particular explanation to shew that two things only are insisted on, as worthy of notice and as expressly opposed to each other; the smallness of the seed, which gives birth to the plant—and the greatness of the plant, which grows out of the seed. Both the smallness of the one, however, and the magnitude of the other, are to be understood with certain restrictions; for great and little are terms of relative import, and the same

thing may be either with respect to some things, and the contrary, with respect to others; and whether it is one or the other, in itself, can be justly determined, only by comparing it with such things as resemble it, or belong to the same class of objects in nature.

The mustard seed belongs to the genus of *λάχανα*, that is, of *oleræ*, *garden* or *pot herbs* in general ^a; which being the case, whatever be the size of its growth or increase at last, and whatever be the

^a Theophrastus, Hist. Plantar. vii. 7. defines the *λάχανα*, as follows: *καλοῦμεν γὰρ λάχανα τὰ πρὸς τὴν ἡμετέραν χρεῖαν*. The following passages will shew the difference of a *λάχανον*, and a *δένδρον*; and the proper sense of *δένδρον*.

Xenophon, describing the face of nature in the desert of Arabia, over which Cyrus was marching, *Anabasis*, i. v. 1, observes; *ἐν τούτῳ δὲ τῷ τόπῳ ἦν μὲν ἡ γῆ πεδῖον ἅπαν ὀμαλὸν ὡσπερ θάλαττα, ἀψινθίου δὲ πλήρες. εἰ δέ τι καὶ ἄλλο ἐνῆν ὕλης ἢ καλάμου, ἅπαντα ἦσαν εὐώδη ὡσπερ ἀρώματα· δένδρον δ' οὐδὲν ἐνῆν*.

Theodoret, i. 988. in Ps. lvii. 10: says of the *ράμνος* or bramble; *ἡ δὲ ράμνος ἄκανθα μὲν ἐστὶ· μεγίστη δὲ, καὶ δένδρον μιμουμένη*.

Athenæus, ii. 54. quotes the following from Epicrates, the comic poet.

Ἄλλ' οἷδα λέγειν περὶ τῶνδε σαφῶς.

Παναθηναίους γὰρ ἰδὼν ἀγέλην

μειρακιδίων ἐν γυμνασίοις

Ἀκαδημίας, ἤκουσα λόγων

ἀφάτων, ἀτόπων. περὶ γὰρ φύσεως

ἀφοριζόμενοι, διεχώριζον

ζῶων τε βίων, δένδρων τε φύσιν,

λαχάνων τε γένη. κᾶτ' ἐν τούτοις

τὸν κολοκύντην ἐξήταζον

τίνος ἐστὶ γένους.

λάχανόν τις ἔφη στρογγύλου εἶναι·

ποιῖαν δ' ἄλλος, δένδρον δ' ἕτερος. κ', τ. λ.

smallness of the beginning from which it proceeds at first, the reason of the thing would have implied, even had the parable not distinctly stated, that the one must be understood of the rate or proportion of its growth and increase, in comparison with those of garden or pot herbs generally; and the other of the magnitude of its beginning, as compared with the outset of the rest.

The growth of the mustard plant in the East, contrasted with that of other garden herbs in the same climate, may be very prodigious; but however great in comparison of that of the rest of its class, it must still fall infinitely short of the size and stature of the cedar of Libanus, or of the oak of Bashan. The proportions of this growth, which the original itself describes as extraordinary, may well appear surprising to a modern reader; but they should not appear incredible. The truth and propriety of our Saviour's allusions in his several parables, or his other discourses, would be sufficient to vouch for the fact of this natural phenomenon, in the present instance, were there no other testimony to render it probable; which, however, is far from being the case^b. No similar phenomenon, it is true, is to be

^b Theophrastus, Hist. Pl. i. v: having defined the δένδρον, the θάμνος, the φρύγανον, the πόα, as such, observes on these definitions: δεῖ δὲ τοὺς ὄρους οὕτως ἀποδέχασθαι καὶ λαμβάνειν, ὡς τύπων, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν λεγομένους· ἕνα γὰρ ἴσως ἐπαλλάττειν δόξειε, (supple ἂν) τὰ δὲ καὶ παρὰ τὴν ἀγωγὴν ἀλλοιότερα γίνεται, καὶ ἐκβαίνει τῆς φύσεως· οἷον, μαλάχη τε εἰς ὕψος ἀναγομένη καὶ ὑποδενδρουμένη. συμβαίνει γὰρ τοῦτο· καὶ οὐκ ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ, ἀλλ' ἐν ἑξ ἢ ἑπτὰ μηνσίν. ὥστε μῆκος καὶ πάχος δορατιαίων γίνεσθαι. διὸ καὶ βακτηρίαις αὐταῖς χρῶνται. πλείονος δὲ χρόνου γυνομένου, κατὰ λόγον ἢ ἐπίδοσις. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν τεύτλων. καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα λαμβάνει μέγεθος. ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον (ὅ οἱ

observed in our gardens ; but as we should be much mistaken, if we judged of the men and manners of

ή) ἄγνος, καὶ ὁ παλιούρος, καὶ ὁ κιττός· ὡςθ' ὁμολογουμένως ταῦτα γίνε-
ται δένδρα. καίτοι θαμνώδη ἐστίν.

Ibid. i. xiv : he observes ; οὐ μὴν, ἀλλ' οὖν μέγιστα γε συμβάλ-
λεται πρὸς ἕκαστον, ἢ ἀγωγή, καὶ ὁ τόπος, καὶ ἡ τροφή . . . ἰκανὸν δὲ
κάκεινο πρὸς πίστιν, ὅτι καὶ τῶν λαχάνων ἕνια λαμβάνει δένδρου σχῆμα·
καθάπερ εἴπομεν τὴν μαλάχην καὶ τὸ τεῦτλον.

Ibid. Hist. Plant. iv. 3 : having just before spoken of the
productions of Egypt, as what one might call indifferently ἡ
δένδρα ἢ θάμνους—there was one of them he says, at Memphis, of
a girth that three men, with hands joined, could not grasp.

Pliny repeats the statement, respecting the growth of the
μαλάχη or *malva*, in so short a time ; specifying that Arabia was
the country which exhibited this natural phenomenon. He adds
that it attained to the size of a tree, twenty feet in height, and
thicker than a man could clasp, at Lixus in Mauritania, also :
H. N. xix. 22.

Herodotus, i. 193 : says the leaves of wheat and barley, in
Mesopotamia, grew to be four fingers in breadth ; and he adds :
ἐκ δὲ κέγχρου καὶ σησάμου ὅσον τι δένδρον μέγας γίνεται, ἐξεπιστάμε-
νος, μνήμην οὐ ποιήσομαι· εὖ εἰδὼς ὅτι τοῖσι μὴ ἀπιγμένοισι ἐς τὴν
Βαβυλωνίην χώραν, καὶ τὰ εἰρημένα καρπῶν ἐχόμενα ἐς ἀπιστίην πολλὴν
ἀπίκται.

There were no palm-trees, in the plain of Babylon, says Xen-
ophon, less than a plethrum (two hundred feet in height) and
many, much more. Cyri Instit. vii. v. 11.

Strabo tells us, that in Margiana, in Upper Asia, where An-
tiochus Soter founded the city of Antioch, the trunk of the vine
was often too thick for two men to grasp ; and the cluster of
grapes, two cubits in length : xi. x. 2. p. 507 : cf. ii. 195, 196.
And such was the fertility of Hyrcania, that one vine would
produce a metretes of wine, (ten gallons,) and one fig-tree, sixty
medimni (thirty bushels, and upwards,) of figs ; xi. vii. 2. 461 :
cf. ii. 195.

In Mauritania also, the vine was as large ; the cluster a cubit
long ; every herb (*βοτάνη*) and *olus* (*λάχανον*) was high for its
kind, and some extraordinarily so : xvii. iii. 4. 645.

There was a rue-tree, or *πήγανον*, at Machærus, in Peræa, as
large as the finest fig-tree. See Josephus, B. Jud. viii. vi. 3.

Farmer mentions a species of broom in the East, which grows

other countries, by those of our own, so should we be still more, were we to measure the powers or productions of nature elsewhere, by the sphere or standard of her operations among ourselves. The influence of climate in expanding the growth, developing the latent properties, changing or modifying the habits and capacities of vegetables, is too well known to require illustration; and it would be easy for botanists to enumerate a variety of plants, especially of the exotic kind, which grow indeed with us, but never attain to their full size and dimensions; which are dwarfish and stunted in a foreign soil, but very stately and enlarged in their own.

It is important, however, to remember, that neither in itself, nor as supposed in the parable, is the magnitude of the growth of the mustard plant absolute, but relative; and as so restricted in its relation, the smallness of the mustard seed, compared with the seeds of other garden herbs, is first insisted on; and the growth of the mustard seed, in comparison of that of other garden seeds, next; and in the contrast between the relative smallness of the one, and the relative magnitude of the other—both, as compared with the like phenomena in the rest of their species—the contrast between the natural inherent property of growth and expansibility in this one kind of seed, and that of others of the same sort, consists.

In judging of effects from their causes, more especially of natural effects from natural causes, the presumption *a priori* is, that the resulting mag-

high enough to afford a man shelter: ii. 427: chap. x. obs. xxi. Lightfoot and others, have collected allusions from the Rabbinical writers, to the mustard-tree in particular, as known to have grown to the size of a fig-tree—as large enough to cover a tent; and the like.

nitude of the effect will be in proportion to the apparent magnitude, or efficacy of the cause. It was to be supposed then, that the least of garden seeds, to all appearance, would give birth to the least of garden herbs. But to this natural presumption the case of the mustard seed was a singular exception; as far more exceeding the rest of its species, in the greatness of the plant to which it gave birth, than it was surpassed by them in the magnitude of its own dimensions.

The smallness of the seed was, no doubt, matter of sensible experience, and too well known to our Saviour's hearers, to require any particular explanation. It was so notorious a phenomenon, at least, that when the rabbinical writers would express the least possible quantity of any thing, they say, as much as a grain of mustard seed^c. But the magnitude of the growth of the plant is specified by its effects on the plant itself, which are twofold; first, to raise it above the level, and to exempt it from the class of the species, to which, by the law of its being, it seemed to have been restricted—the herbs of the garden; and secondly, to place it upon an equality with a species that seemed to rank far above it and beyond its reach; that is, to incorporate it among the trees of the forest: and as one of that number, and as the most characteristic criterion of the new species, to which it now belonged, as the plainest intimation of its change of nature—to give it the power of affording lodging and protection

^c See Maimonides de Jurejurando, iv. 4. The note of Dithmarus.

to the fowls of the air, within its branches: which none of the mere herbs of the garden, none but the large and lofty inhabitants of the forest, are qualified to furnish.

The shortness of the parabolic description in this instance, precludes the necessity of any further remark on its material structure. We may observe only, that in all natural productions, the beginning or first state is commonly very disproportionate to the ultimate result of the process. Every thing which attains to its perfection in *time*, has its infancy before its *maturity*; and from the first of these periods it advances by gradual steps, whether more or less rapidly, to the other. It is therefore in the comparison of the beginning and the end of the process—in the contrast between what the subject once was, and what it now is—that we are made fully sensible of the effect of the interval, or of the magnitude of the change, which has taken place.

The difference between the first and the last stage of any such process, is in nothing so remarkable, as in the ultimate growth and expansion of vegetable life, beginning with the seed. Compare the original acorn, with the full grown oak which has sprung from it; contemplated in the majesty of its height and stature; the firmness, solidity, and symmetry of its trunk; the range and amplitude of its arms or branches. The disparity between cause and effect, externally, which is thus often the greatest in the case of seeds and of the natural productions to which they give birth, may be further increased to our apprehensions, by the rapidity with which such effects are accomplished, even from such causes. The

growth of vegetables may be as quick as enormous^d. Garden or potherbs in particular, we know from experience, are wont to be reared the same season in which they are sown: and if the mustard plant is one of them, it must partake of this common property of its species. Though, then, it may not be expressly asserted in the parable, it is yet implied, that the mustard seed, besides the property of expansibility, which enables it to give birth to so disproportionate a growth in the plant, possesses also that of great quickness and activity, in the performance of its work; a single summer sufficing to develop its powers, and to raise the tree to the perfection of its size and bulk.

THE MORAL.

The comparison of the grain of mustard seed is not peculiar to the present parable, nor restricted to one counterpart, that of the kingdom of heaven. We find it employed in one or two passages of the gospels besides, as an image of regular occurrence to illustrate, personify, or adumbrate, a very different object of comparison. It will be worth our while to consider its use and meaning in these instances, before we proceed to regard it in comparison with its proper correlative, the kingdom of heaven. The things, indeed, which are compared

^d Hieronym. iii. 1492. *ad calc.* in Jonam iv: speaking of the gourd, which gave shade to Jonah, (in Hebrew *ciccion*, in Syriac *ciceia*,) describes it thus: Est autem genus virgulti, vel arbusculæ, lata habens folia in modum pampini, et umbram densissimam, suo trunco se sustinens: quæ in Palæstina creberrima nascitur, et maxime in arenosis locis; mirumque in modum, si sementem in terram jeceris, cito confota consurgit in arborem, et intra paucos dies quam herban videras, arbusculam suspicis.

to the grain of mustard seed, in these several instances, are not the same; but the mustard seed, which is compared to them both, is. And as the nature and properties of the same subject must necessarily be the same, under whatever point of view it be regarded—that quality which renders the mustard seed a fit image to represent one of two things, indifferently, will equally adapt it to the illustration of the other.

First, then, in the conversation with the nine apostles, who in the absence of our Saviour and the other three, at the time of his transfiguration, had not been able to eject the demon from the epileptic patient—in answer to their question, why they had not succeeded in casting out the spirit—we find Jesus replying, (*Διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν ὑμῶν*^e;) which the received translation renders, “Because of your unbelief.” I think, however, it would be more correct to render it simply, “Because of your want of faith:” for he proceeds to say: “Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain,” (the mountain, no doubt, on which the transfiguration had taken place, and which was close at hand,) “Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

It cannot be justly inferred from these words, that the apostles did not possess, at the present time, any kind or degree of the faith in question; but simply not that kind or degree, which is represented by the grain of mustard seed: nor yet, that the possession or nonpossession of this faith, so represented, was something that depended upon them-

^e Matt. xvii. 20. Harm. P. iv. 11.

selves; whose presence, if it came to exist, should be due to themselves—or whose absence, while it was still wanting, was chargeable upon themselves.

On a subsequent occasion, the apostles are said to have come to our Lord, with the request, (*πρόσθες ἡμῖν πίστιν*^f): “Increase our faith;” or, “Add to us “faith;” in the terms of which petition there seems to be an allusion to the very want or defect of faith, spoken of before. Our Lord replied, “If ye had “faith, as a grain of mustard seed; ye would have “said to this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up “by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and “it would have obeyed you^g.”

Upon these words, also, the same remark may be made as before; that the want or defect of any kind or degree of the faith in question, is not ne-

^f Luke xvii. 5. Harm. P. iv. 44.

^g If the ancients are to be believed, certain species of trees or plants, did grow in the Red sea, more particularly. Theophrast. Hist. Pl. i. 7: *διήρηται δὲ ἄλλο κατ’ ἄλλο γένος τῶν ὑγρῶν, ὥστε τὰ μὲν ἐν τέλμασι, τὰ δὲ ἐν λίμναις, τὰ δὲ ἐν ποταμοῖς, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ θαλάττῃ φύεσθαι· τὰ μὲν ἐλάττω, καὶ ἐν τῇ παρ’ ἡμῖν· τὰ δὲ μείζω, περὶ τὴν ἐρυθρὰν.* iv. 8: he tells us, these trees were laurels and olives.

Pliny H. N. xiii. 48: *Nascuntur et in mari frutices, arboresque, minores in nostro. Rubrum enim et totus orientis oceanus refertus est silvis.* Cf. xiii. 50, and ii. 106.

Plutarch, ix. 705. De Facie in orbe Lunæ; says, trees of wonderful size, laurels, olives, and Ἰσίδος τρίχες, grew in the sea upon the coast of Gedrosia, and the Troglodytis, where nothing else would flourish.

It is probable, that what these authorities took to be trees, were some other natural production, (perhaps of coral,) seemingly resembling them. In any case, such trees grew in shallow water, where their roots could rest on the bottom: but our Saviour speaks of a physically impossible effect, a tree’s growing in deep water, in the open sea.

cessarily implied by them, but simply of that particular one, which is compared to the grain of mustard seed; and neither its absence at present, nor its possession at any future time, was, or would be, dependent on the apostles themselves; or entitle them justly either to blame for the one, or to praise for the other. For if the rest of the discourse, which follows on this declaration, is in any manner connected with it, the tenor and drift of that discourse are plainly to impress the hearers with the conviction, that even the utmost possession, and the most effectual use and application, of the faith in question, would be nothing on account of which they would have a right to pride themselves, or to claim any desert of their own.

There are two other passages, besides these, in which the same kind of faith is clearly the subject of description, and is as plainly characterised as before; though its counterpart, the image of the grain of mustard seed, is not expressly mentioned also.

First, in answer to the observation of the disciples, made at the time of pronouncing the curse on the barren fig-tree, our Lord said ^h; “Verily I say
 “unto you, If ye have faith, and do not hesitate,
 “not only shall ye do the *miracle* of the fig-tree,
 “but should you even say unto this mountain, (the
 “mount, that is, of Olives, on which the transaction
 “took place,) Be thou lifted up, and be thou cast
 “into the sea; it shall come to pass.”

The next morning, when the subject of this miracle was again adverted to, Jesus said then also ⁱ:

^h Matt. xxi. 21. Harm. P. iv. 65.

ⁱ Mark xi. 22, 23. Harm. P. iv. 66.

“Have faith of God. For verily I say unto you,
“That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be
“thou lifted up, and be thou cast into the sea;
“and shall not hesitate in his heart, but shall be
“persuaded that what he is saying, is coming to
“pass; whatsoever he shall say, it shall be *so* unto
“him.”

If we lay these passages together, the following conclusions are deducible from them. The faith, which before was adumbrated by the grain of mustard seed, is the same which in the last of these instances is designated *faith of God*. Faith of God, after the Hebrew mode of expressing the superlative form in the degrees of comparison, is faith of the highest and greatest kind of the genus or class, to which it belongs. Faith of God is a faith which hesitates not: and faith of God is a faith, which because it hesitates not, is competent to produce the most extraordinary effects, by the most disproportionate means: as by a mere word to make a tree take root and flourish in the sea; to cause an huge mountain to remove from its place, and be buried in the waters of the ocean.

It is evident, then, that we cannot properly understand by the faith in question, what is perhaps considered the ordinary meaning of the term—the principle of Christian belief, or the mainspring of Christian practice—but something, both in its cause and its effects, entirely restricted to the production of *miracles*, that is, of phenomena which transcend the ordinary powers of man, and the regular course of nature. It is manifest also, that a faith whose essence consists in hesitating not, is peculiarly an internal principle, a quality of some kind or other:

and yet, as a faith which by hesitating not, produces such extraordinary effects, it is an inward principle or quality, which operating outwardly and sensibly, is adequate to bring about the most unlikely effects by the most disproportionate means¹.

¹ It will scarcely, I think, be imagined that the meaning of the words, (ἐὰν ἔχητε πίστιν ὡς κόκκον σινάπεως,) is, “if ye have ever so little faith; even as much as a grain of mustard seed;” though the known minuteness of the seed itself, might so far favour such a construction. But in the first place, a quality, principle, or feeling as such, does not admit of being compared to a sensible, material subject: and secondly, a quality, principle, or feeling as such, is not like a material subject, capable of quantity, division, or any other property of external nature.

To the possession of the faith in question it is made essential, not to doubt or hesitate; which being the case, whosoever doubted not, according to the condition, was possessed of the faith; whosoever doubted at all, was not possessed of it, whether he doubted little, or doubted much.

Besides, a certain degree of the miraculous faith, so much at least as was adequate to the healing of diseases, and to the ejection of evil spirits, was already possessed by the apostles, to whom it had been given, at the time of their mission in the second year of our Lord's ministry, as a qualification or as an auxiliary for the better execution of their task. (See my Harm. P. iii. 26.) It does not appear that the power so communicated to them on that occasion, was ever afterwards withdrawn. They must have believed themselves to be possessed of it still, at this very time, when they made the attempt to eject the spirit from the epileptic patient; or they would not have made such an attempt at all, or if they had, have been surprised at their failure, as something novel and unexpected. The same inference follows from what is related, Mark ix. 38, 39: Luke ix. 49, 50: not long after the transfiguration (see my Harm. P. iv. 14.): and whatever degree of miraculous power had thus been already bestowed on the Twelve, the same degree of it was afterwards imparted to the Seventy. (See the Harm. P. iv. 26. Luke x. 1, 9, 17—20.)

It may reasonably be presumed, therefore, that the petition of the apostles, not so long after the transfiguration, (πρόσθεε ἡμῖν

The grain of mustard seed is regularly compared to the faith of this description, no doubt as the most

πίστιν,) was for an increase of the miraculous faith, or what is the same thing, the power of working miracles : and that the words, (διὰ τὴν ἀπιστίαν ὑμῶν,) at the time of the transfiguration, which first implied the absence or defect of the faith in question, as not yet possessed by them, conveyed no reproach to them on that account. God, indeed, not only is the true efficient cause of every miracle performed by a man, but even to the production of such effects by the instrumental agency of a man, requires a perfect confidence in himself, a firm reliance on his own power and cooperation. It cannot be supposed that the Deity should work miracles by an instrument who doubts of his omnipotence, and is not sure of his concurrence : so that a miracle-working faith is necessarily an *implicit* faith, and diametrically opposed to the quality of distrust or unbelief.

But the apostles, we may presume, would scarcely be reproached for not yet possessing, what had not yet been bestowed upon them ; nor, perhaps, could as yet be bestowed upon them. Neither the time itself, nor the frame and temper of their own minds, were proper for such a gift : the object of which was not to gratify the personal pride, ambition, or vanity of its possessors, but to qualify them for the successful discharge of their own part, as emissaries and ministers of the gospel. The privilege of working miracles, in a Christian evangelist, must not be regarded merely in the light of a peculiar distinction, confined to one or two persons—which endued them with a sort of omnipotent control over the laws of nature, and rendered them almost as superior to the rest of mankind, as God was superior to them—but merely as a means to an end ; as a qualification for a peculiar work ; as a loan or trust of God, who gives nothing in vain, to be employed in his service, and to be accounted for to him. The time would come, when the apostles would enjoy the utmost degree of this gift ; but the time would also come, when their minds would undergo a great change, as to the proper idea of its value, design, and application, before they possessed it. The drift of the discourse, which follows on the passage cited from St. Luke, is therefore, to impress them beforehand with this conviction ; that, in whatsoever way they might have been

appropriate emblem of it, which could have been selected; and therefore, as we may presume, by virtue of the properties of its own nature. Hence, if that which distinguishes the faith in question, is the efficacy of the internal principle, compared with the inadequacy of the means by which it works, and the magnitude of the results to which it gives birth; that which distinguishes the grain of mustard seed, and enables it to correspond to such a faith, is the vegetative power and vigour of the plant, internally, compared with the minute proportions of the seed from which it springs, and the magnitude of the size to which it attains. It is, therefore, the most characteristic emblem, among natural objects, especially of its own class, to mark the disproportion between the first beginning and the final result of any process; between the sensible and external cause, and the sensible and external effect.

Miracles of every kind and degree are necessarily the work of a power greater than human; but the instruments of all such works, are notwithstanding always men. A miraculous or supernatural effect, if wrought by an instrument greater than man, would surpass the ability of man;—but it might not surpass the ability of its instrument; it might

qualified for their proper task, and whatsoever they might have effected in the execution of it; yet as mere instruments in the hands of God, who could have done nothing, had they not been empowered by him, they would be bound to consider themselves merely *unserviceable* servants; whose master had done every thing, and they themselves as good as nothing; who could no more claim the praise or merit of what had been done by their means, than the tools or implements of an artist could arrogate to themselves the credit of the work, executed by him with them.

be nothing more than a being superior to man, could ordinarily effect. If wrought by such an instrument, then, it would be destitute of one of the conditions of a miraculous effect; that of being greater than what the agent, under such circumstances, could ordinarily bring to pass. It might be miraculous to our apprehensions, and as referred to the standard of human power; but it would not be so, in itself, nor as referred to the capacities of its actual instrument.

Hence, though God, and the power of God, must be the real efficient cause of every miracle, as such; yet man, and the agency of man, if it is to appear a miraculous effect, must be the means employed to bring it to pass. In like manner, though the different natural internal qualities of growth and expansibility are the true causes of the difference of degrees in the increase and thriving of plants, yet the beginning of their growth, the germ out of which every thing is developed, to the eye of sense is nothing but the seed. And as, in the popular construction of the cause of miracles, all such effects, however great, and however truly the work of God alone, are yet ordinarily attributed to the human instrument, whose word and whose will, in such instances, are seen to be followed by the effect; so the disproportionate size and stature of the plant, which begin in the seed, and proceed apparently from no sensible or external cause but the virtue of the seed, may be said to be due to that.

The power of God is adequate to the production of any effect, which does not involve a self-contradiction, or imply both its being and its not being at the same moment of time; and were a miracle to

be directly referred to that power, or sensibly seen to be the effect of that power, it must cease to astonish as a miracle; it must be looked upon as matter of course; as what could not fail to happen—as what ought to surprise merely if it failed to happen. For the wonder would be, where God himself was the immediate agent, if the effect did not come to pass, however extraordinary, rather than if it did.

But the power of man is necessarily finite, and its utmost limits are well known by experience; especially with regard to those changes or affections of external nature, in the production of which the essence of miracles consists. The popular construction, therefore, of the cause of the miracle, in such cases, which refers it to the instrumental means, is the best adapted to the moral effect and impression of the miracle; and even indispensable to their fully taking place. In like manner, were the ultimate size and stature to which plants attain, to be referred directly to the natural inherent principle of growth and expansibility, which they all, more or less, possess; the result would no longer appear extraordinary and surprising. Such a natural or physical cause would at once account for such a natural or physical effect. But the popular construction of the effect, which refers it to the seed—and looks only at the visible difference between the apparent first cause, and the real ultimate effect—though perhaps not the most philosophical, is obviously the most advantageous for impression, and for the application of that impression to any moral or doctrinal purpose ^m.

^m St. Paul must have had his eye on one or other of the passages, above cited from the gospels—1 Cor. xiii. 2. where he speaks of having *πᾶσαν τὴν πίστιν, ὥστε ὄρη μεθιστάειν*: and it is

The declared object of comparison to the grain of mustard in the present instance, is the kingdom of

clear that he understood by *πίστις*, in this instance, the power of working miracles in general, and by *πάσαν τὴν πίστιν*, the utmost degree of that power in particular ; such a degree of it as was adequate to remove mountains.

Jerome observes, iv. pars. i. 99. *ad med.* in Matt. xxi: *La-trant contra nos Gentilium canes in suis voluminibus, quæ in impietatis propriæ memoriam reliquerunt, asserentes apostolos non habuisse fidem: quia montes transferre non potuerint.* He means some objection of Porphyry's or Julian's ; and he returns this absurd answer to it, that the apostles probably did perform such miracles, but that they are among the number of those which have not been written.

In the twelfth chapter of the first of Corinthians, St. Paul enumerates the different gifts or graces of the Spirit, in the following order, 8—10: the *λόγος σοφίας*; the *λόγος γνώσεως*; *πίστις*; *χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων*; *ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*; *προφητεία*; *διακρίσεις πνευμάτων*; *γένη γλωσσῶν*; *ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν*. In another part of the same chapter, (ver. 28) he enumerates the various orders of *διακονίαι* also, that is of persons set in the church ; first, apostles ; secondly, *προφήτας* ; thirdly, *διδασκάλους* ; then *δυνάμεις* ; then *χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων* ; *ἀντιλήψεις* ; *κυβερνήσεις* ; *γένη γλωσσῶν*.

In the former instance, there were nine varieties of gifts ; in the second instance, there are eight varieties of orders or persons. It is evident, however, from verse 30, that a ninth is understood, though not expressed ; viz. *ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν* ; as what should have come next to *γένη γλωσσῶν*. There being, then, the same number of gifts, and the same number of orders of persons set in the church, it seems a reasonable inference, that there is some relation in each instance, between the gift and the order corresponding to it ; that looking on both enumerations as *συστοιχίαι*, any one member of either rank is coordinate (or *ἀντίστοιχον*) with the opposite member in the other. In this case, one of the ranks specifying the kinds and varieties of the gifts, the other specifies the kinds and distinctions of their possessors.

On this principle we should set over against the *λόγος σοφίας* on one side, the order of the apostles, on the other ; over against

God or of heaven ; and therefore as we may presume, in some one of the senses of the gospel dis-

the λόγος γνώσεως, the order of προφήται ; over against πίστις, that of διδάσκαλοι. And as to the rest, on either side, the very language employed is sufficient to shew what stands over against what : for we have δυνάμεις in the scale of persons, as well as ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, in that of gifts : and the same may be said of χαρίσματα λαμπάτων ; of γένη γλωσσῶν ; and of ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν, respectively : that is, in all these instances, as far as the distinction of persons or orders is concerned, the abstract stands for the concrete ; and the name of the gift represents also the possessor of it. On this principle, too, ἀντιλήψεις, the sixth in the order of persons (another example of an abstract term for a concrete, and of the name of the office, that of an helper, for its possessor) will properly stand over against προφητεία, the sixth in the rank of gifts ; and κυβερνήσεις, the seventh of the one, in like manner will correspond to διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, the seventh in the other.

It is not my intention, at present, to institute any inquiry into the nature of these different gifts, nor of that of the corresponding distinctions of persons, with a view to shew the fitness or adaptation of the one to the other, in every instance. I will observe merely, that if we refer to Ephesians iv. 11, the only other passage in St. Paul's Epistles, which speaks of the personal distinctions of the orders of governors or ministers in the church, we have apostles, prophets, and evangelists, first mentioned in that verse ; and then ποιμένες and διδάσκαλοι, in general : from which it appears, that the evangelists in this instance correspond to the διδάσκαλοι, in the former ; and that ποιμένες and διδάσκαλοι, comprehend all the other orders, and distinctions of persons, below διδάσκαλοι, there.

Among the above gifts, if there were any the same in kind though differing in degree, the reason of the thing must imply that the gift of the higher would entail the possession of the lower ; but not *vice versa*. Thus the λόγος σοφίας necessarily implied the λόγος γνώσεως ; but not the λόγος γνώσεως the λόγος σοφίας. This connexion and subordination might be pointed out in other instances ; but we are chiefly concerned at present only with these three varieties of the same gift ; πίστις, χαρίσματα

pensation, as before. But as it now appears, that where the smallness of the seed is contrasted with

λαμάτων, and ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων. It is evident, that the two last are certain kinds and degrees of the power of working miracles, limited to their proper subjects; and it appears from what has been already said in explanation of the first, the gift of πίστις as such, that that is the highest degree of all, and restricted to no particular subject whatever.

The received translation renders, ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, by, the “working of miracles:” and we see, that in the enumeration of the order and distinction of persons, as contrasted with the order and distinction of gifts, that which answers to ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, in the latter, is expressed by δυνάμεις in the former. But the χαρίσματα λαμάτων are miracles, as well as these; the gift of πίστις implies the power of working miracles, as well as these. It is manifest therefore, that miracles *absolutely* are not meant by ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, on the one hand, or by δυνάμεις, as the possessors of the power of working such miracles, on the other; but miracles, with a certain reference and restriction; and that, by a common figure of speech, the name of the *genus*, in respect to such effects, is given to one sort or *species* of them in particular.

The term ἐνεργούμενοι is of very common use, in ecclesiastical writers, to describe a certain kind of subjects or persons; which, it appears, were those who stood in need of *dispossession*; who required to be submitted to the process of *exorcism*, or dispossession*. We may infer then, that the particular class of miracles, denoted by ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, are the instances of such dispossession; and the power implied by the performance of them, is the power of ejecting or dispossessing evil spirits.

It seems, then, that πίστις, χαρίσματα λαμάτων, and ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων, or δυνάμεις, express three kinds, varieties, or degrees of the power of working miracles; the first, the greatest of all, and limited to no particular sphere of operation, or kind of effects; the second and third, inferior degrees of the power, and restricted to proper instances respectively, one to the power of

* See for example, Theophyl. ad Autolyicum, ii. 10. *ad calc.* p. 114: ii. 38. 194—Origen. i. 144. h. De Principiis, iii. 4—Constitt. Apostol. viii. 6. 339. C. 7—Chryst. i. 326. B. C. Hom. 28.

the magnitude of the tree, the grain of mustard seed is the appropriate emblem to represent the relative

healings, as such, that is, the cure of natural diseases and infirmities, the other, to the power of dispossession, or the ejection of evil spirits. There can be no doubt that the gift of πίστις, the possession of the first of the three, entailed the other two, though not the reverse: but as to the other two, they so far resembled each other, and were so far of like kind, that it was indifferent in what order they were mentioned. In the rank or συστοιχία of gifts, χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων takes precedence of ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων; but in the classification of the order of persons, δυνάμεις stands before χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων.

It is observable, as I have shewn in my former work *, that the kinds of miracles denoted by these two latter denominations, were such as our Saviour began his ministry by performing first; and such as he communicated first to the Twelve, and secondly to the Seventy, the power of performing, in his own lifetime †; but nothing more than these. And were it proper for me to enter at present on the controverted question, how long the miraculous powers originally vouchsafed to the church, continued to be exercised by it, I think it would be possible to shew, upon as unexceptionable testimony as we have to produce to any past matter of fact whatever, that the possession of *this* degree of miraculous power, and as restricted to such effects as *these*, continued to be enjoyed and exercised, long after the lifetime of the last of the apostles. And if I may declare my own opinion upon this subject; I am strongly inclined to believe, that thus much at least of the supernatural gifts and graces, originally bestowed on the church, was never intended to have been taken away from it, had the church itself continued to deserve its constant presence with, and continuance amongst it; and had not human wickedness, in this instance, as in many more which might be mentioned, defeated the benevolent designs of God in behalf of men.

The capital error into which the writers on the controversy in question have fallen; among whom Dr. Middleton may be reckoned the chief; is this, of not distinguishing between the kinds and degrees of the power of working miracles generally;

* Vol. ii. Dissertation viii. P. ii. p. 281.
p. 171. sqq.

† Vol. i. Dissertation iii.

disproportion of an apparent cause, and a real effect;

but of taking it for granted that any degree of the communication of that power, necessarily implied the utmost extent of it. Such was not the real state of the case. The highest gift of the power in question was the gift of *πίστις*: and there was certainly a time, when even the apostles themselves, though already possessed of a certain degree of the power of working miracles, were not yet possessed of the gift of *πίστις*. I should be ready to concede that this gift, in all probability, expired with the last of the apostles, or with the last of the evangelists and apostolical men; for whose use it seems to have been particularly intended; and yet that the power of working miracles, of any kind or degree whatever, was not necessarily withdrawn too. Every one will admit that so much of the power in question as was first given, might continue longest; and as given and exercised by itself, when as yet there was no other, might continue to be enjoyed and exercised by itself, after every other had ceased.

I think it would be easy to shew that the power of ejecting evil spirits, and the faculty of giving health to the sick, so far from being the most extraordinary instances of miraculous power, as Dr. Middleton frequently seems to suppose, are really among the easiest and simplest of all. But I forbear, lest such a digression should carry me too far. I will only observe in conclusion; that in judging of the testimony of the fathers to the fact of miracles, as still continuing to be performed in their time, down to the middle of the fourth century at least, we ought to be very cautious how we reject their testimony altogether, and deal such hard measure to them, as we find Dr. Middleton doing; who would make us believe that they were all either fools or knaves, and either deceivers themselves or deceived. We ought to consider first and chiefly, what kind of miracles they are, to which their testimony is given. In every instance, or nearly every instance, which has come under my observation, for the time in question, I find their testimony given to the fact only of such miracles, as healing the sick, or ejecting spirits; and in some few instances, to the fact of the continuance of the gift of prophecy, or the foretelling of the future: with respect to all which, and more especially to the two first, there is an antecedent probability that they should be true.

of the actual first beginning and the actual final result, of a certain process: the point of the comparison, as concerns the kingdom of heaven, must turn on the disparity existing, or sometime to exist, between the first beginnings, and the ultimate state and constitution, of the gospel dispensation. Considered in this particular point of view, no meaning of the phrase will answer to the description in the parable, but that of the EXTERNAL LIMITS of the visible church: nor any fact in the present or future history of Christianity, but this, of the disproportion which should ultimately be found to exist between the smallness of its original extent, and the magnitude of its ultimate enlargement and expansion.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The mustard seed was sown by the owner, in his own field, or in his own garden; and either by his own hand, or by that of some other person in his stead. The Christian church, if considered as first planted in the world, was planted in that which by virtue of creation, was the right or property of Christ; if as planted in Judæa, was planted in that which is often described as his garden or vineyard: and considered as planted in either, it was planted by the ministers and servants of Christ, acting by his command, and in his behalf.

A single grain of mustard seed only was taken and cast into the ground: and one visible church as such, was planted by Christ. The fortunes of the future tree depended on the growth and increase of this one seed; and the future existence and extension of the visible church, elsewhere, depended on the wellbeing and continuance of the church, origin-

ally planted in Judæa. This one seed was taken and cast, apparently, at random into the ground; and the church was planted in Judæa, with nothing, as it seemed, to rely on for its preservation and support, but the intrinsic vitality of the Christian religion, and the tutelary providence of God. The predisposition of the seed to take root, under all circumstances of its commission to the ground, and the native vigour and expansibility of the plant, were so much the more clearly displayed, by the development and growth of the tree, from such a beginning; and the intrinsic energy of the Christian religion; its adaptation to the purposes of its being; and its inherent tendency to diffuse and expand itself, as widely as the scheme of probation, which goes along with it, wherever the subjects of its operation, among moral and responsible agents, are to be found, which is in fact among all mankind—were not less strikingly declared in the propagation of the gospel so begun, and yet in the course of time, extended over all the earth.

The mustard seed, when first sown, was the least of the seeds of its kind; and the Christian church, at the outset of the gospel dispensation, was the least of all the societies in the world. A religious society admits of being compared even with a political, as one species belonging to a common genus, does with another—if both agree in whatever is essential to every society as such; viz. subsisting in a determinate form and in a given place, and being subject to proper laws, observances, or ordinances, which serve as a bond of union to the members of the society, and as a mark of discrimination between them and all others besides.

The external limits of the visible church, considered as the locality of a definite religious society living within it, cannot be greater than in proportion to the numbers and diffusion of the members, who make up the society itself. It would be just as absurd to suppose a church without a congregation, as a congregation without a church. The magnitude of the Christian church, then, at its first beginning, must be estimated by the amount of the individuals which at that time composed its congregation: and when the Holy Ghost fell on the day of Pentecost, the number of names together was but one hundred and twenty; the extent of the pale of the church was but the upper chamber, which then contained them all.

The mustard seed, however, though the least of the plants of its kind, possessed a vigour and expansibility naturally, which were calculated to make it exceed them all: and the Christian society, though the least of all societies, at the outset of the gospel dispensation, was formed for diffusion, and could not fail, in the course of time, to take in and comprehend within its own, all other societies of every kind. The native vigour of the seed was speedily displayed in the growth of the plant; and the diffusiveness of the Christian society in the fact, that from the small and limited amount of which it consisted at first, it soon became a considerable community. Three thousand were added to its numbers at once on the first day, and five thousand at once on one day, not long afterⁿ.

But the growth of the mustard seed surmounted the ordinary limits, which nature appeared to have

ⁿ Acts ii. 41: iv. 4.

fixed to the increase of the herbs of the garden; and served to assimilate it to a new species of productions, by raising it to the rank and giving it the dimensions of one of the trees of the forest. Of this change in its nature, and of the magnitude of its previous enlargement, the most significant proof is the fact, that when it is arrived at that state, the birds of the air make their nests and roost amidst its branches. The trees of the forest alone, and not the plants or shrubs which grow in gardens, are the proper habitation of the feathered creation.

Among the other images employed in the figurative parts of scripture, the trees of the forest are one, to denote kingdoms or empires; and when that is the case, not only the further usage of scripture, but the reason of the thing must imply, that by the fowls which lodge in their branches, nothing can be properly understood, but the nations or societies over which they extend, and of which they consist^o. The mystical tree of Daniel denoted the Babylonian empire; and the birds of the air, which found lodging and shelter within its branches—the beasts of the field, protected and screened by its shade, were consequently explained to mean the various communities of mankind, comprehended in its dominions, and subject to its sway^p.

The expansion of the mustard seed, therefore, from so small a beginning, to the ultimate dimensions of a tree like this, prefigures the increase and enlargement of the boundaries of the visible church, from the narrow limits to which they were confined at the commencement of the gospel, to the extent of

^o See Ezek. xvii. 22—24: xxxi. 3—14.

^p Dan. iv. 10—15. 20—22.

a vast and capacious empire; which like the mountain, in another of the prophecies of Daniel, beginning with the stone hewn out of the rock, without hands, should at length become large enough to fill the earth; and being diffused and established among all nations under the sun, should comprise within its compass, and subject to its jurisdiction, an incalculable number of distinct and independent societies; all composing the tenants of one tree, and as such making up one catholic or universal society, the congregation of the visible church throughout the world.

The moral of the parable is therefore, the ultimate extension of the Christian religion, compared with the smallness of its beginning, and the narrowness of the circle by which it was originally bounded, and within which it was first professed. It is one of the prophecies on record in the gospels, and not the least significant of all, to foretell the great and unexampled rapidity of progress, that should attend on the course of its propagation, as soon as it was formally begun; a rapidity and diffusion, not more considerable in themselves, than unlikely and unprecedented, under all the circumstances of the case.

Christianity must needs begin in Judæa, though from Judæa it might afterwards go forth into all the earth: the number of its professors must still have been restricted at first, to the mere amount of our Lord's personal followers, though the pale of its society ultimately, should come to embrace the whole of mankind. Considered in this point of view, more especially—as having a beginning, and that necessarily on a small and limited scale—the rise and

progress of the gospel dispensation, could properly be represented by no symbolical description, but such an one as the parable proposes; a description of something, which not only sets out from a proper beginning, but arrives at a proper consummation—not only begins and ends where it ought, respectively, but exhibits the utmost disparity between the first and the last state of the process. Both these qualifications meet together in a natural image like that of the formation of the mustard tree, with the further advantage of great quickness of growth; and therefore the more exactly accommodated to be the material emblem, for the personation of an event like this, of the rapid propagation of the gospel.

Not only the first amplification of the bounds of the Christian church, and as compared with its original dimensions, the most improbable and disproportionate; but the celerity with which it was effected—are facts too well authenticated, in the history of the progress of Christianity, not to be strictly taken into account, as coming within the scope of the parable. Our Saviour predicted, two days before his crucifixion, that his religion should be preached in all the world, and for a testimony unto all nations, within the natural term of the lifetime of one generation, and before the punishment of the infidelity of the Jews, in the ruin of their state and nation, should begin. The interval between the date of the crucifixion, U. C. 783. A. D. 30. and that of the destruction of Jerusalem, U. C. 823. A. D. 70, is but forty years; by which time, we have the testimony of Suetonius and Tacitus, that Christianity had reached Rome; and even that it had taken root there,

to a very great extent, earlier than the date of Nero's persecution, U. C. 817. A. D. 64. Nor is there any doubt, that while Christianity had penetrated thus far, from the place of its birth, to the west, it had travelled equally far in the direction of the east, the north, and the south. The apostles, St. Paul and St. Peter, alone, appear to have been chiefly instrumental in propagating it to its extreme limits, in the first of these directions; whence we may infer that the rest of the apostles in particular, were employed in carrying it continually forward in the other directions⁹.

In the fact of the extent, combined with that of the rapidity, of the propagation of the gospel, one of the strongest arguments both of the divine original of our religion, and of the reality of the supernatural means and assistances, by which its reception must have been mainly enforced, and its dissemination aided and promoted, is justly supposed to consist^r. Had the Christian religion not been divine, it would not have made its way, in so short a time, over all the earth—had the original emissaries of the gospel not been endued with supernatural powers

⁹ Vide vol. i. Diss. ii. p. 128, &c.

^r The argument from the rapid propagation of the gospel is, of course, not neglected by its advocates in former times. Arnobius, ii. 44: *Nonne vel hæc saltem fidem vobis faciunt argumenta credendi, quod jam per omnes terras in tam brevi temporis spatio immensi nominis hujus sacramenta diffusa sunt?* &c.

Ibid. 50: *Enumerari enim possunt, atque in usum computationis venire ea, quæ in India gesta sunt, apud Seras, Persas, et Medos, in Arabia, Ægypto, in Asia, Syria, apud Galatas, Parthos, Phrygas, in Achaia, Macedonia, Epiro, in insulis et provinciis omnibus, quas sol oriens atque occidens lustrat: ipsam denique apud dominam Romam, &c.*

of conviction, they could not have succeeded every where alike, and so speedily, as we are sure they did.

The extraordinary progress of the gospel, in so short a time, after its first setting out, if we duly reflect upon it as a well authenticated fact, must alone be decisive of the question, how far human means, as such, were employed upon its propagation, had human means in themselves been adequate to it. Though human means had been competent to the undertaking in themselves, they would not have produced their effect unless they had been allowed to work unobstructedly : and had they been allowed to work unobstructedly, availing themselves of every instrument of compulsion, save that of violence, and of every motive of persuasion, save that of pandering to the voluptuous or to the malicious passions of mankind ; they could not have produced their effect, they could not have executed their task, in so short a space of time.

Divine cooperation may enable even human agency to bring about the most inconceivable results, and with the most disproportionate dispatch, or shortness of the time ; but human agency, when left to itself, is not only confined in the possible magnitude of its effects to the actual extent of its powers, but in the interval, requisite for their accomplishment, cannot outstrip the course of nature, or the reason of the thing ; so as to perform all at once, what is adequately to be executed, only in ages.

The missionaries of Christianity who labour, and have long been labouring, in Pagan or Mahommedan countries, in zeal and sincerity are perhaps not inferior to the original emissaries of the gospel ; while

in point of ability, merely human, or in acquired fitness for their task, they probably greatly exceed them all, if we except St. Paul. Yet the present missionaries of the gospel meet with no such success, in the same field of personal exertion and for an end and purpose the same—as its first apostles and evangelists met with. Though they labour in some countries, with many of those circumstances in their favour, which conspired together at first to oppose the success of the apostles, their progress is slow and discouraging, and scarcely perceptible after the lapse of generations upon generations. It is seldom that their converts are made from among adults; and their only prospect of evangelizing any country entirely, seems to be the possible, but at the best the tedious and tardy alternative, of getting the education of the youth into their hands, and bringing them up as Christians.

It would be highly unreasonable and absurd, however, to suppose that human agency alone, or natural causes, as they are called, however much they may otherwise account for, can yet adequately explain the fact of the diffusion and reception of a religion, so widely and so rapidly, which at its first commencement, humanly speaking, had nothing for it, and every thing against it; and calculating on the ordinary course of natural contingencies, the ordinary operation of natural causes, had not the least probability, but the utmost improbability, beforehand, of ultimately succeeding: a religion, which was to emanate from Judæa, the most obscure and inconsiderable part of the ancient world; and to be propagated by the instrumentality of Jews, a race of men proverbially despised and

slighted, out of their own country: which would encounter as much obloquy and resistance from its own countrymen, who ought to have been its well-wishers, friends, and promoters, as from the Gentiles, who could not but be strangers to it, and prejudiced against it: which had no temptation to offer, in the prospect of temporal advantage from its reception—in wealth, promotion, reputation: which boasted of no genius, learning, or eloquence, in its advocates or professors: which made war every where upon each system of false religion, however long established, and strongly fortified against all assaults: which encountered, consequently, everywhere, the united force of superstition, self-interest, priestcraft, leagued together to oppose all innovation, and to support the existing state of things: which by disturbing the immunity of the ancient systems of religion, and introducing total changes and revolutions in men's opinions and practice on these subjects, seemed to sap the foundation of social order, and justly to provoke the interference and opposition of the civil magistrate: which aimed at nothing less than making men anew, by altogether reforming their principles, habits, and practices: whose doctrines even the most candid and impartial must allow to be deeply mysterious, if not totally incomprehensible, and the sceptic and infidel openly deride as extravagant, irrational, and absurd: whose morality is so pure and exalted, as to seem scarcely compatible with human corruption and infirmity; and practised in ever so little a degree, is still highly revolting to the natural appetites and inclinations, and imposes the necessity of an harsh, a painful, and an uninterrupted self-denial: which

forewarned its followers to hope for no ease or safety in its profession, and would soon be found by experience to conduct to nothing so certainly, as detestation and obloquy, imprisonment, scourges, tortures and death: which seemed to involve the elements of its own destruction, by commanding to suffer and forbidding to resist: whose utmost encouragements and highest prospects, great and glorious as they may be, (*ἐπιζόμενα μέλλεται*^s), are matter of hope and not of experience, and may be realized in another life, but cannot be enjoyed in this: which promised no immediate reward to well-doing, nor denounced any immediate punishment to evil-doing; but leaving both to the future judgment of God, seemed to encourage vice by the assurance of present impunity, and to discourage virtue, by making it, at least in this life, its own reward. A religion, which could prevail at its first outset, against all these impediments, as the Christian religion to be in existence this day, must once have prevailed; and could prevail against them in so short a time, and become as firmly established as it is this day, almost as soon as it began—must have been divine.

^s Thucyd. v. 111.

PARABLE FIFTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE LEAVEN.

MATTHEW XIII. 33. Cf. Luke XIII. 20, 21.

HARMONY P. III. 17. Cf. P. IV. 35.

MATTHEW xiii. 33.

Another parable spake he unto them, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was leavened all *of it*."

LUKE xiii. 20, 21.

²⁰ And again he said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was leavened all *of it*."

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

WERE any explanation necessary, to illustrate the circumstances of a comparison, which turns on so familiar a process as the mode of using leaven in the manufacture of bread, we might remark, first, that a certain quantity of leaven is supposed to be wanted for a certain quantity of a mixture of flour and water, called dough: the proportion of the leaven is, no doubt, accommodated to that of the dough: the leaven is taken, and introduced into the dough, from without: the leaven has qualities, before its introduction, which predispose it to act upon the dough; and the dough has qualities, in like manner, which predispose it to be wrought upon by the

leaven: the leaven is buried in the dough, to produce its effects: the leaven is kept there, until the whole is leavened or fermented, that is, until the end, designed by its introduction, is attained.

These circumstances are all either expressed or implied in the parable, short as it is: and taken together, they comprehend every thing which concerns the use or application of leaven in the formation of bread; the source of its introduction into a previously prepared mass, as from without—as no part of the mass, beforehand—the mode of its operation, as acting internally and concealed; the degree of its efficiency, as pervading every part, as diffusing itself through *all* the mass; and the nature of its effects, as superinducing new properties on the mass, and rendering it fit for uses and purposes, for which it was not fitted before.

One observation more, we may make on the particulars of the account, before we take our leave of them; because it tends to illustrate both the simplicity and the propriety of our Saviour's allusions, even in such familiar circumstances as these. Attention to decorum or probability may be shewn in small things, as well as in great. The quantity of the mixture for which the leaven is supposed to be wanted, is described as ἀλεύριου σάτα τρία, or, as it is rendered, “three measures of meal;” that is, what we may consider neither more nor less, than under ordinary circumstances, was likely to be wanted by one family, and at one time. It is the quantity specified Gen. xviii. 6: on a domestic occasion, requiring a provision of bread, such as we may suppose that in the parable to have been ^a. Arbuthnot, in

^a In the instance referred to, Gen. xviii. 6. the Septuagint

his tables of ancient weights and coins, reckons the seah (or *σάτον*) of Jewish dry measure to equal one peck, and something more than one pint, of our measure. So that three of these measures would about equal three pecks and one fifth of ours.

THE MORAL.

The comparison of the leaven is found immediately subjoined to that of the grain of mustard seed, not only in the present instance, but on the much later occasion, when these two parables or comparisons in particular, as we learn from St. Luke, were repeated ^b. If this association of them, on two several and independent occasions, was not arbitrary, and accidental, (as there is no reason to suppose it was,) it must have been due to some connexion or other between them: in which case, we may justly infer from it, that though the respective morals of the two, may not be exactly the same,

or *ο'* render the quantity in question, by *τρία μέτρα σεμιδάλεως*: Aquila and Symmachus both rendered it by *σάτον*. The *ο'* render also, 2 Kings vii. 1. 16. 18. "a measure of fine flour, and "two measures of barley," by *μέτρον* in the one instance, and *δίμετρον* in the other: Josephus, on the contrary, renders it by *σάτον*: Ant. ix. iv. 4. The word *σάτον* does not occur in the Septuagint.

Theodoret tells us, i. 394. Quæst. in 1 Reg. Interr. lix: that Aquila rendered the *ύφει* (or epha,) by *σάτον*.

Josephus reckons it to equal one modius and an half of Italic measure: Ant. ix. iv. 5: and Jerome also says it was a measure of Palestine, containing a modius and an half: iv. pars i. 57. *ad calc.* 58. *ad princ.* in Matt. xiii. These calculations of its content are greater than that of Arbuthnot, who reckons the Roman modius equal to a little more than one peck of English corn measure.

^b Luke xiii. 18—21. Harm. P. iv. 35.

yet they will probably be found akin to each other, and so closely interwoven as not easily to be separated asunder.

I observed, in the General Introduction ^c, that the several morals of no two of the parables were strictly tautological: and should any one be inclined to conclude, that from the regular conjunction of these two comparisons in particular, they may refer to the same counterpart, and differ, perhaps, from each other, only as one mode of exhibiting, elucidating, or personating a certain thing, may differ from another, a little consideration will easily convince him, that such is not the case; that these two comparisons do not refer to the same counterpart; nor is there any such agreement or resemblance in the obvious scope and tendency of their material circumstances, respectively, as there would be, if they did.

The leaven, it is true, is taken and put into the dough, as the mustard seed was taken and committed to the ground; but the leaven is taken and put into the dough, to act *upon* the dough, the mustard seed was taken and committed to the ground, to be acted upon *by* the ground. The leaven, then, is the cause of the effect, in the former instance—the ground, by its warmth and moisture, acting on the seed, produces it in the latter; the dough is the subject of the change in the one—the mustard seed is that of the effect in the other.

The two things, then, under the circumstances of the case, do not admit of being compared together: for there can be no comparison between an agent as such, in one instance, and a patient as such, in

^c Chap. xi. vol. i. p. 136, 137.

another—between what is designed to produce a certain impression, and what is intended to suffer one. There may be, it is true, a natural sympathy between the leaven and the dough; and there may also be a natural sympathy between the mustard seed, or any other seed, and the ground—which will qualify the one to act, and the other to be acted upon, respectively: but the relation between the things is not altered hereby; the leaven is still the active cause in its proper effect, and the dough, the passive subject; the ground is still the proper agent in the other instance, and the mustard seed the proper patient.

The contrast, therefore, in the comparison of the grain of mustard seed, lay naturally between what we may call the activity of a certain proper agent, and the passiveness of a certain proper subject, in the production of a common effect; between the power of soil and climate in stimulating the growth of a certain seed—and the expansibility of the growth in obedience to that stimulus—both, as conspiring to the same result, the magnitude of the tree in comparison with the smallness of the seed.

But no such contrast can be intended in the present instance, as between the first beginning and the final state of the growth and expansion of one and the same subject, by whatever means they may be brought to pass, and however disproportionate the one may be to the other. No change is produced in the passive subject here, analogous to that which takes place in the other instance. The absolute quantity of the mass remains the same, before and after the introduction of the leaven; the sensible bulk of which, compared with that of the mixture,

is too small to be taken into account, or to produce any sensible effect. Leaven is introduced into dough, under all circumstances, not that it may add to its quantity, but that it may alter and modify its quality: that is, not to produce a sensible or visible effect, in adding to the growth and dimensions of the mixture, but an insensible and invisible one, in changing its nature and properties.

If, then, there is any studied opposition here between the different states of the same subject, at different times, in the course of one and the same natural process, as there was in the former instance; it must lie, not between the sensible and external magnitude of the dough, before it was subjected to the action of the leaven, and its sensible and external magnitude afterwards, but between the insensible and internal properties of its nature, before its union with the leaven, and its insensible and internal properties after it. And if there is any analogy in the present instance, between the activity of a certain agent and the passiveness of a certain subject, concerned in the same result, as there was in the former; it will consist in the diffusiveness of the leaven, compared with the quantity of the mass which it has to impregnate, and in the alterative power or property which accompanies it, wherever it is diffused, and enables it to act upon all parts of the mass alike, in producing its proper effect. The absolute quantity of the leaven admits of no comparison with the absolute quantity of the mass; but the proportion of the former is adapted to the magnitude of the other: and this being the case, its diffusiveness makes up for its disparity of absolute magnitude, and its diffusiveness is shewn, by its pervading the

whole of the mass—by the presence of its action and influence at one and the same time, in every part of a more considerable substance; and as a consequence of that presence, the production of its natural effect, in altering, modifying, and qualifying the properties of all the mass. Both these things are strictly to be taken into account, as manifestly indispensable to each other. The alterative property of leaven would be ineffectual, to qualify the whole of the mass, for a certain end and purpose, were it not combined with its diffusive: its diffusive property would be of little use, for the same effect, if an alterative one did not go along with it.

To proceed, then, to the more immediate investigation of the import of the parable. There are some words in every language, which though metaphorical in their origin, have yet been so familiarized by use in their secondary or borrowed sense, as scarcely to be distinguished from strict proprieties of speech. The word leaven, is one of these in our own language; the occurrence of which in a tropical signification, not only in books and serious discourses but in ordinary conversation, is too common to require any particular illustration. If we attend to its meaning, in such instances as these, we shall see that it is generally employed to characterise some *principle* or other; some motive or rule of action; some disposition or persuasion, which produces a corresponding effect on the characters, habits, or practices of mankind. It is used of something which operates at first concealed, and internally; but is visible in its influence and effects, at last, externally.

The analogical sense of the word leaven, in these

instances, must be to denote the influence of a strictly moral cause, in reference to a strictly moral effect: nor, indeed, can the principle of analogy, which is in all cases the foundation of the metaphor properly so called, be more strictly applicable than to such a cause with respect to such an effect, on the one hand, and to leaven as calculated to work upon its appropriate subject, a mixture of flour and water, on the other. It is peculiar to principles, that they operate internally and unseen; it is peculiar to leaven, that it produces its effect, buried in the midst of the dough. It is peculiar to such principles, that they qualify the character and conduct accordingly; and it is equally so to leaven, that it modifies and alters, sensibly, the nature and properties of the dough. The grain of mustard seed, compared with the largeness of the mustard tree, was consequently not an apter emblem, to denote the smallness of a physical beginning, in contradistinction to the magnitude of a physical result, than is the activity and secret influence of leaven, upon its proper subject, to describe the efficacy of a proper moral cause, in accounting for the commensurateness of its proper moral effect.

The first instance, when we meet with the mention of leaven in any part of scripture, under circumstances of a peculiar import, is in the history of the institution of the passover. Every Christian must be aware, that among the conditions prescribed for the celebration of the paschal supper, and of the seven days' feast ensuing, this, of abstaining from the use of leaven, of eating no bread, either in public or in private, but unleavened, was one.

As the whole of the solemnity of the passover was

figurative; as the paschal lamb was a symbolical victim; as many of the circumstances, connected with it—its selection; its preparation; its consumption—are ascertained by the writers of the New Testament themselves, to have been symbolical, and possessed of a meaning and signification beyond the mere acts: so, we may presume, was the particular injunction, of eating nothing with this lamb, or at this time, but unleavened bread; an injunction as strict and peremptory as any.

It was peculiar to this prohibition of the use of leaven, to be confined to the feast of the passover; though there were two other feasts, of equal importance with it, in the Jewish calendar. And this feast consequently, alone is known by the name of the *ἑορτή τῶν ἀζύμων*, or “the feast of unleavened bread.” The feast of the passover, too, was the first in the Jewish calendar, and the beginning of the Jewish sacred year. And it was expressly appointed to be the beginning of that year, because the Jews were delivered from Egypt on the night of the passover—the night of *the first* passover—when the Lord destroyed the firstborn of the Egyptians, but passed over the houses of the children of Israel; a distinction between them and their oppressors, which was followed by their immediate deliverance.

If then, the efficacy of that sacrifice, by virtue of which the Jews were saved while the Egyptians were given up to destruction, be justly considered typical of the efficacy of the death of Christ, by which salvation, in due time, should be procured to all mankind; it is not incongruous to this supposition, that the putting away of leaven (which had before been employed on the usual purposes of do-

mestic life) preparatory to that sacrifice, should be conceived to intimate that change of the natural principles and former conduct; that regeneration of the old man; which are incumbent upon all who aspire to partake in the benefits of the sacrifice of the death of Christ.

Even at the time of the institution of the passover, with this intention of signifying the necessity of some reformation of the life and principles, preparatory to partaking in the immediate benefits of that institution, such a symbolical provision might not be useless, nor irrelevant to the circumstances of the Jewish nation. Though, by the appointment of the passover for their future observance, and by its celebration first of all at this time, and by that direct participation in its benefits which they derived from it that very night, it cannot be doubted that the Jews were now formally adopted as the people of God, with the prospect and assurance of all the advantages to accrue to them from that relation; yet it is certain that, by their long residence in Egypt, they had contracted many corruptions both of faith and practice, incompatible with the just continuance of that relation; thoroughly to purge them from which, required the discipline of a forty years' wandering in the wilderness.

It is no objection to this view of the original design of the institution, that the same abstinence from the use of leaven, was to be repeated every year after the settlement in Canaan. The necessity of putting away leaven, year after year, at a certain time, was a consequence of the repetition of the passover, year after year, at the same time: and as the necessity of the efficacy of the death of Christ

for the forgiveness of sins, as adumbrated by that sacrifice, is shewn, by its constant repetition, to be perpetual; so the necessity of an unremitted struggle between nature and grace, the necessity of a constant endeavour at the regeneration and reformation of the old man, as incumbent on those who hope to partake in the benefits of the Christian sacrifice, might be represented by the condition of abstinence from leaven, attached to the observance of the Jewish passover, and repeated as often as its celebration came round. For whatever we may do, to get rid of the natural leaven, it will still adhere to us, more or less; and every day, by possibly adding to the number of our lapses and offences, may add to the inveteracy of its influence, and to the tenacity of its hold upon us.

Nor could it fail to convey an instructive lesson even to the Jews—to all, at least, who regarded this provision in a moral point of view—that as at the end of one sacred year, in obedience to the divine command, they removed or destroyed every particle of the old leaven, before they presumed to eat of the passover; so when the feast was over, they would have to begin another year with new leaven^d. This might be construed to intimate, that as the change of all their habits or principles, repugnant to the law of God, was necessary to keep

^d So we find Justin Martyr reasoning, in his Dialogue with Trypho: Dialogus 164. 14—25. Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι τὸ σύμβολον τῶν ἀζύμων, ἵνα μὴ τὰ παλαιὰ τῆς κακῆς ζύμης ἔργα πράττητε, (ὁμοίως δὲ πάντα σαρκικῶς νεοοῦκατε, καὶ ἡγείσθε εὐσέβειαν, ἐὰν τὰ τοιαῦτα ποιῶντες τὰς ψυχὰς μεμεστωμένοι ᾖτε δόλου καὶ πάσης κακίας ἀπλῶς.) διὸ καὶ μετὰ τὰς ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας τῶν ἀζυμοφαγιῶν, νέαν ζύμην φυρᾶσαι ἑαυτοῖς ὁ θεὸς παρήγγειλε, τούτεστιν ἄλλων ἔργων πρᾶξιν, καὶ μὴ τῶν παλαιῶν καὶ φαύλων τὴν μίμησιν.

them in his favour; so, when they had resolved upon that change, and had been admitted to the benefits of the first and chief of his external ordinances accordingly, they were bound to persevere in their resolutions, and to lead a new life, on principles agreeable to a change for the better.

The natural distastefulness of unleavened bread, and the accompaniment of bitter herbs which was also a part of the paschal ritual; might obviously be designed to remind the Jews of the severity of that bondage, from which they were emancipated first, at the time of the institution of the passover; and yet have an evangelical use and import besides. For they would be equally significant, if they were understood to express the necessary painfulness, the repugnance to natural inclinations, of the duty of a constant self-denial; without which we cannot maintain the struggle, much less obtain the victory, in the contest so indispensable to our salvation^e.

This explanation of the symbolical meaning of the prohibition of leaven, and consequently, of the import of the symbol itself, seems to be confirmed

^e It was probably a consequence of the prohibition of the use of leaven, at the feast of the passover in particular, with such a symbolical design and meaning, as I have been contending for; that the law further forbade it to be used in making any of the meat offerings, brought unto the Lord; or with any sacrifice or offering whatever. See Lev. ii. 11. It was the emblem of natural corruption; no mixture of which, in any act of the worshipper, could render his act acceptable to the Lord; but quite the reverse.

Aulus Gellius, x. 15. tells us, in like manner, that the Flamen Dialis, or priest of Jupiter among the Romans, was forbidden to touch leaven: but why, he does not mention. Plutarch says the same thing.

implicitly by the testimony of St. Paul, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8: "For our passover also hath been sacrificed for us, *even* Christ. Therefore let us keep a feast, not in old leaven, nor in leaven of malice and wickedness, but in unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth."

According to St. Paul, then, as the passover wont to be sacrificed, was Christ, so the old leaven, the leaven required to be put away, in order to a due participation in the feast, was the leaven of malice and wickedness; the new leaven, which was to supersede the old, or as he terms it, the unleavened bread with which the feast was to be kept by Christians, was the leaven of sincerity and truth. For, it is manifest that though he speaks of unleavened bread, that is, of bread, supposed to want leaven, yet it is bread, supposed to be destitute of leaven, only as no longer impregnated with the old leaven, as wanting *that* leaven in particular. The idea of leaven is capable of a good sense as well as of a bad one; and if malice and wickedness are represented by the old leaven, their opposites, sincerity and truth, must so far constitute a new leaven. Accordingly, in the former part of verse 7, he says to the same persons, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new mixture, *even* as ye are unleavened:" a new mixture, a mixture prepared with new and better leaven; as became those, who were, or ought to be already free from leaven, that is, from the old leaven, which they had put off in Christ; that is, when they became Christians^f.

^f So Ignatius, Ep. ad Magnesianos, x. 361. D: *ὑπέρθεσθε οὖν τὴν κακὴν ζύμην, τὴν παλαιωθεῖσαν καὶ ἐνοξίσασαν, καὶ μεταβάλλεσθε εἰς νέαν ζύμην, ἧ ἔστιν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός. κ', τ. λ.*

With St. Paul, then, the metaphor of leaven is clearly recognised for the influence of certain principles of conduct; and therefore for a moral cause, considered in reference to its proper moral effect. The context of the passage proves this beyond a question. He is censuring the imprudence, not to say the criminal apathy, of the Corinthians, in tolerating the offence of the incestuous person, so long, with impunity. Among other things, he warns them of the danger to be apprehended, from such a precedent, to the morals of the whole society, as well as of its inconsistency with the purity of the gospel calling: "Your glorying *is* not good. Know "ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole "mixture?" (1 Cor. v. 6.) In writing to the Galatians also, to warn them, in like manner, of the dangerous tendency of the doctrines which the Judaizing teachers were disseminating among them, he repeats the same proverbial, but apposite, form of expression: "The persuasion *is* not from him that "calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole "mixture." Gal. v. 8, 9.

In the Gospels, the term (*ζύμη*) "leaven," occurs only twice, besides the present instances; once, when our Saviour cautioned his disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians^g; and again, when he told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees^h. On the first occasion, the apostles themselves discovered, after a while, that he meant the *doctrine* of those sects, by their leaven; and on the second, he added himself,

^g Matt. xvi. 4—12. Mark viii. 13—21. Harm. P. iv. 6.

^h Luke xii. 1. Harm. P. iv. 32.

in further description of this leaven, (*ἥτις ἐστὶν ὑπόκρισις*), “ which is hypocrisy.” In both instances, then, the word was used in a figurative sense; and in both, the meaning of the figure was such, that it must denote a strictly moral cause in contradistinction to a strictly moral effect.

Having arrived at this conclusion, with respect to the import of the principal term or image, in the material description of the parable; if we proceed to the consideration of its counterpart, or what is to be understood by the kingdom of heaven, as compared to leaven—the only point of view in which we can regard the gospel dispensation with a specific resemblance to the properties and effects of this natural substance, is that of a moral cause, productive of a proper moral effect. I conclude, then, that the comparison was designed to illustrate and predict the moral influences of Christianity, strictly so called. Its sensible increase, compared with its beginning, or the visible difference, in point of extent, between the limits of the first Christian society, and the amplitude of the boundaries of the church at last, was the moral of the comparison of the grain of mustard seed; the distinction between which and the present, has been already pointed out. There could not therefore be in this parable, as there was in the last, any direct and studied contrast, between the first and last state of the same subject, in respect of quantity or magnitude; but there might be in this, what we did not perceive in the former, an intentional opposition between the first and last state of one and the same subject, in respect of properties or quality. It could not, then, be designed by this comparison, to contrast the first sen-

sible and outward beginnings of Christianity with its final and sensible result, when it came to be established over all the world; but it might be so, to contrast the moral situation and character of the world, in which it was established, before its establishment and after it; and therefore to illustrate the efficacy of the moral influences, considered as the cause by which the gospel should work upon the world, in comparison with the kind and extent of those changes which it was to produce in the moral situation and character of mankind, considered as the proper effect of those influences.

It is no farfetched sense or meaning of the terms kingdom of heaven, or gospel dispensation, in general, to suppose them to stand for the moral influences of Christianity: for these influences are the immediate consequences of the religion, and inseparable from its being and existence. To suppose the existence of the religion, and yet not to suppose the existence of such its moral influences also, would be a contradiction in terms. The moral effects of the religion, then, whatsoever they are, must necessarily go along with the being of the religion: and therefore, there is a very close connexion between the moral of this comparison, and that of the last. But the properties of any subject, however necessarily they may flow from the essence, are yet not its essence; an effect in point of time cannot be prior to, however soon it may follow on, a cause; nor a consequent to an antecedent. The moral influences of Christianity then, must still be distinguished from its mere being or existence; and the extent or degree of these influences, from the limits of its external profession: and therefore, the

moral of this parable, however much it may resemble that of the last, is not to be confounded with it.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The Christian religion is a system, which consists partly of revelations on divine, and partly of directions on social or practical subjects: its moral influences, therefore, are such as spring out of its doctrines relating to the one, and its precepts relating to the other. Their proper effects, consequently, admit of no other comprehensive distinction, than into the influence of the gospel dispensation, respectively, in determining the faith, and in regulating the lives and conduct, of the professors of Christianity, wheresoever it is embraced. These we may call its religious, and its moral effects, as such. And so far as, taken together, both of them constitute the proper object of comparison to the material description in the parable, and the proper subject of the prophecy, contained therein, they are each to be considered in reference to the first and most immediate consequences of the dispensation, or what should begin to be their effect, as soon as Christianity itself began to be promulgated. For Christianity as such, when this parable was delivered, had yet no being; and as its natural influences, whether spiritual or practical, could not be evidenced in their effects, until the religion which gave them birth, had come into existence; so when they began to operate, their most striking and illustrious display, under the circumstances of the case, would be in the first results of their operation itself.

Those, who by the dispensation of providence in

their particular instance, have been born in Christian countries, and educated on Christian principles; who have lived, consequently, in the uninterrupted experience and enjoyment of the religious and moral effects of Christianity; cannot easily conceive the novelty and magnitude of that change in the spiritual and the moral condition of mankind, which was produced, at the beginning of the Christian era, by the diffusion of the gospel, and the promulgation of Christian doctrines and rules of conduct, through all parts of the heathen world. To say that Christianity, from the moment of its appearance, had a natural tendency to make men both wiser and better; to give them right notions of religious truth, and right principles of duty; to say that it retains this tendency still, and in whatever degree it is received and acted upon, (such is its instinctive adaptation to the improvement of our moral nature,) to the same degree it necessarily produces these effects; is to say but little in its praise, and to do justice but very imperfectly to the full extent of the services, which it has rendered to mankind.

Extreme transitions from one state to another, must be judged of by direct comparison and contrast. Would we duly appreciate the greatness of that moral revolution, which the promulgation of Christianity originally brought to pass, we should transplant ourselves back to the time when it first appeared; we should consider not what is the established order of things at present, (which has long been the effect and result of its operation,) but what was the state of the case, when it entered on the discharge of its task. A blind man suddenly endued with the power of sight would alone be fitly qualified

to comprehend the difference between total darkness, and the enjoyment of all those impressions of which the sense of vision is the medium—the contemplation of all those wonders in the external world, which would open on the eyes, as soon as they were capable of seeing them, and would fill the observer with admiration and astonishment: impressions, which have long since become insensible, and wonders which have long ceased to possess any novelty, to those whom the enjoyment and exercise of the faculty of sight from their birth, have familiarized to its effects. The most ignorant and illiterate person in a Christian community, is wiser and better informed on all the great points of human faith and duty, than the most learned and philosophical in ancient times: the lowest standard of public and private morality in a Christian country, at present, is superior to the highest and most refined in any heathen community, before the Christian era.

Among the other expedients which the enemies of the Christian religion have resorted to, either to lower its credit, or to undermine its truth; one has been, to construct and propose what are called systems of *natural religion*, the supposed result of principles both of belief and of practice, discoverable by the light of nature, or the unassisted reason of man; in which they pretend to comprise and embrace the substance of the gospel revelations, both on religious and moral subjects. The object of these attempts is to injure Christianity, by making it appear a very superfluous and unnecessary thing; to invalidate the truth of its claim to be of divine original, to call in question the reality of its pretensions to the name

and character of a revelation, as such, by representing it as a copy or transcript of natural religion, and nothing more; as teaching and containing nothing, truly good and valuable, and generally applicable to the case of moral agents, like men, which was not discoverable by the mere light of human reason.

The conduct of the authors of these systems is as uncandid and disingenuous, as it is evil-minded and malicious. All their own knowledge and certainty, on such subjects, which qualifies them for the construction of these systems both of faith and ethics, they owe to their Christian education; yet instead of confessing their obligations to the religion, they attack her with weapons, which they have purloined from her own armoury; they turn the knowledge she has taught them, against their teacher.

If we would fairly estimate and compare together, the unassisted powers of human reason, and the originality of the disclosures of the gospel, in order to be satisfied how far the discoveries or assurances communicated by the latter, were anticipated, or capable of being anticipated, by the efforts of the former, we must go, not to the systems of natural religion proposed in modern times, but to such as were compiled and framed in ancient times; we must form our opinions, not from the lucubrations of deists and sceptics, but from the works of pagan moralists and philosophers. As far as the latter admit of comparison with the gospel; that is, are equally founded in truth, and contain any thing equally good and unexceptionable—they may have some claim to be considered the genuine achieve-

ments of unassisted and unenlightened human reason: but the former, we may confidently assert, under no circumstances, can justly pretend to be so.

If the truth, indeed, must be spoken; it appears to me just as reasonable to suppose there ever was a time when mankind were living in what is falsely called the state of nature, without society, without laws, and without language itself; as that there was ever a time, in the history of human existence, when the understandings of men were left entirely to themselves, without any light or assistance from above; and consequently in the necessary circumstances to make the experiment, whether the discovery either of their faith or of their duty, was actually within the power of human reason, and might really be made for themselves. Natural religion is just as much a fiction, and just as much a non-entity, as the old notion of the original of society, and of the invention of language; if by natural religion is meant any thing absolutely independent of revealed, which there was a time when men did not possess, and a time when they came to possess; and the discovery of which meanwhile was due to themselves, and to nothing else. The real state of the case is exactly the reverse, of what this pretence of a distinction between natural religion as such, and revealed religion as such, would imply it to be: either natural religion is not to be distinguished from revealed, or revealed is the parent of natural; and whatever is part and parcel of natural, was originally a part of revealed. A state of nature, if it means any thing, must mean the state in which man was formed; and that was a state from the first of acquaintance with his Maker; whose being,

and whose relation to himself, he was never left for a moment to deduce from the conclusions of abstract reasoning, but was made sensible of, by direct and personal communication with Him, as soon as he began to exist. It is idle, then, to talk of the light of reason, in matters of religion, as independent of the light of revelation. Mankind was under the divine tuition from the first, and the light of reason was already informed by the light of revelation, when the human understanding began to exercise itself at all, and to try its powers, for the first time, either upon itself, or on things without.

Under these circumstances, it would always be a very questionable fact, whether the most rational and enlightened systems of moral or religious duty, composed by any of the philosophers of antiquity, could justly be considered schemes or systems of natural religion, strictly so called; in the construction of which the light of revelation, mediately or immediately, remotely or proximately, was no way concerned; nothing but the unassisted powers and exertions of human reason. But the systems of natural religion, which modern deists have compiled and proposed to the prejudice of Christianity, it is impossible should ever have been formed, without any assistance from Christianity itself. Whether their authors are aware of the fact, or are disposed to acknowledge the fact, or not; it is their acquaintance with Christianity itself, and with the discoveries which Christianity has made, that qualifies them even for the work of constructing such systems. As well might it be denied that we derive our knowledge of colours, figures, sounds, and of the other affections of external nature, from our eyes, our ears, and the

rest of our senses, as that born and educated in Christian countries, and familiarized in a thousand ways, from our earliest infancy, to Christian modes of thinking and speaking, we owe to the Christian religion our correct notions of God, ourselves, and of others, and our acquaintance with the several duties which flow from the several relations, in which we stand, or are capable of standing, to any of these—to God, ourselves, or our neighbour.

But it is one thing to originate a discovery; and another to follow it up: it is one thing to supply data, and another to deduce consequences. It is one thing to prove a doubtful point, and another to judge of the proof: it is one thing to supply proof, for the first time, and another to repeat it; to bring to light what was long before concealed; and to see that it ought to have been discovered sooner. Every thing which the gospel professes to inculcate, as peculiarly its own, save only those truths which from their mysterious nature are necessarily above our comprehension—may be very agreeable to human reason; but when was it taught, and by whom, until it was inculcated by the gospel? The assurances which Christianity has given us, on a variety of important points, are capable of a very substantial and satisfactory confirmation from the arguments, which our reason may suggest: but when were these arguments considered decisive, before that conviction of the certainty of their conclusions, which we owe exclusively to Christianity? In short, in all those respects, wherein the authors of systems of natural religion attempt to set up the competency of reason, to the prejudice of revelation, the praise of the first discovery, the benefit of the first definite

and well ascertained information, on every fundamental point, belongs to the law, or to the gospel. Their adversaries have done no more, than to avail themselves of their disclosures ; to build upon their assurances ; to repeat their proofs ; to collect, to methodise, and to enlarge their notices.

That there existed no such thing as a pure and spiritual religion, in the world, prior to the Christian era : (except in the small community of the Jews—and even there only as mixed up with much of carnal and symbolical matter—) that the world was, consequently, full of impure and idolatrous systems of religion, all equally false, however numerous, and equally corrupt, however different from each other ; are facts too well known to require any proof. That each of these systems disappeared in its turn, before the Christian religion, until at last nothing was left in the established possession of the same countries, which had once been exclusively occupied by these systems, but the same pure and perfect form of divine truth, which has since subsisted to this day ; and consequently, that the influence of the Christian religion in amending the religious opinions, and in rectifying the faith, of a large portion of mankind, was speedily exemplified in the result ; are facts which also stand in no need of demonstration.

That the degeneracy of morals, too, which is more or less invariably the concomitant of false religion, was at its worst, about the period of the Christian era, is a point which has often been established ; and is, in reality, one of the most remarkable among the criteria, which distinguish the era of the gospel dispensation, as that fulness of time

marked out by prophecy beforehand, for its commencement.

The wickedness which at that time overspread the Gentile world, may be estimated from the frightful catalogue of vices and crimes, which St. Paul has given us at the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, and in various parts of his other Epistlesⁱ. Nor, however horrible and deplorable this picture may be, ought it to be considered an exaggerated one, or taken all in all, more than a faithful statement of the principles and practice of the times. It is found by experience that neither the good, nor the bad moral character of mankind, can remain fixed and stationary. Men can neither steadily persist in the practice of goodness, without gradually becoming better; nor in a course of wickedness, without becoming worse and worse. And if we consider the greater tendency of human nature itself to grow worse rather than better, the progress of degeneracy may be much more rapid than that of improvement; and the extremity to which human wickedness may arrive at last, may greatly exceed in proportion, the utmost degree of perfection to which any, even the most virtuous of men, can attain in this life.

At the precise period of the gospel era, the licentiousness of the Gentile world had long been gaining ground; and had reached a point of moral debasement and degradation, which it is not possible to contemplate without horror and disgust. It is in the power of any one who is familiar with the writers of this period, to confirm by their testimony

ⁱ Rom. i. 21—32. Ephes. iv. 17—19. Cf. Gal. v. 19—23.

every item of St. Paul's description of the men and manners of his time. Dio Cassius, Suetonius, Tacitus, Josephus, Seneca the philosopher, Pliny the elder, Juvenal, Persius—bear out the assertions of the apostle; and either repeat the same statements after him, or supply by particular examples the proofs of his general declarations. We may judge indeed of the appositeness of his descriptions to the moral character of the heathen world at large, from this single consideration; that not unfrequently he reminds the Christian converts themselves, that their own moral situation had once been no better. They had lived in the practice of those very vices, whose picture he draws in all its nakedness and atrocity; and they had been reclaimed from them, to a new life and existence, only by the regenerating influence of the gospel^k.

^k Were it certain, that the author of the Book of Wisdom was not a Christian, we might compare with St. Paul's description of the Gentile world, the following from that work.

XIV. 23. "For whilst they slew their children in sacrifices, or used secret ceremonies, or made revellings of strange rites;

24. "They kept neither lives nor marriages any longer undefiled: but either one slew another traitorously, or grieved him by adultery;

25. "So that there reigned in all men without exception blood, manslaughter, theft, and dissimulation, corruption, unfaithfulness, tumults, perjury,

26. "Disquieting of good men, forgetfulness of good turns, defiling of souls, changing of kind, disorder in marriages, adultery, and shameless uncleanness."

There is a remarkable passage in Philo Judæus, *De Mercede Meretricis*, ii. 268. 25. sqq. which enumerates a long list of the moral consequences, which he says will follow on the love of criminal indulgences, in the corruption of the character, and the progress from bad to worse, without limit to the kind and ex-

That there was, consequently, at this period of the history of the world, an urgent necessity for a divine interposition, to rectify the corrupt faith, and to amend the still more corrupt and depraved principles and conduct of mankind; that the gospel dispensation began just at this time, and produced each of these effects on as large and complete a scale, as the necessity of the case required; the evidence of the fact alone is sufficient to prove. It remains to be shewn that by so doing, it answered to the description of the leaven in the parable.

First, though the leaven was introduced into the mass, for a proper end and purpose, it was introduced from without, as one distinct and independent substance into another: and the gospel dispensation, though designed and calculated, by its introduction into the world, to bring about a change and renovation of a certain kind, in the religious and moral situation of the world, was yet not *of* the world; was a scheme and dispensation, though begun and carried on *in* the world for the reformation of the

tent of the change. Ἴσθι οὖν, ὃ οὗτος, ὅτι γενόμενος φιλήδονος πάντ' ἔση ταῦτα: πανοῦργος, θρασὺς, ἀνάρμοστος, ἄμικτος, δύσχρηστος, ἔκθεσμος, ἀργαλῆος, ἀκρόχολος, ἀνεπίσχετος, φορτικὸς, ἀνευθέτητος, and so on, through a catalogue of epithets, *one hundred and forty-six* in all. Perhaps such a collection of vices, all centering in one subject, and all the supposed concomitants on the original loss of moral purity, in once yielding to the seductive influence of licentious pleasures, is no where to be met with, but in this passage. Had the author been purposely describing the consequences of original sin, or enumerating the whole torrent and deluge of moral evil, which broke in upon the world after that one transgression of the parents of the human race; the account could not have been more complete, the details more minute and circumstantial, the picture more frightful and abominable.

world, yet emanating from the providence of God; and so far independent of the world.

There was a natural sympathy between the leaven as the active cause, and the material mass as the passive subject, in a certain process, which qualified the one to affect, or be affected by the other: and there was a similar congeniality between the moral influences of the gospel, as the cause or instrument with which the Christian dispensation had to work in carrying on the business of human regeneration, and the moral nature of mankind, considered as the subject on which those influences would have to operate, to produce their proper effect.

The proportion of the leaven was adapted to the quantity of the mixture which it was designed to pervade and impregnate: and the efficiency of the moral influences of the gospel, as the event alone would be sufficient to prove, must have been accommodated to the extent and degree of the work which they were designed to perform. No effect can be produced except by an adequate cause: and if the change which ensued in the moral and religious condition of the world, after the promulgation of the gospel, was the consequence of it, the moral influences of the gospel must have been *a priori*, adequate to bring about such a change, and likely to be followed by such an effect.

The absolute quantity of the leaven, when its proportion had been once determined, was something ever afterwards one and the same: and the moral influences of such a dispensation as the Christian, being the direct result of its peculiar and characteristic revelations both on points of faith and on duties of practice, which in the nature of things

must continue the same, and cannot be different at one time from what they are at another, would be uniform and identical also; and being always the same in kind, considered as the cause, would always be adapted to produce the same effect.

The leaven was buried in the midst of the mass; where, if it acted upon it at all, it would still act concealed and imperceptibly. The moral influences of the Christian religion would operate internally, on the hearts and consciences of its converts. Its doctrines might be openly taught and promulgated; but their natural regenerating effects would be produced within. Yet the active power of the leaven was visible in its sensible impression on the dough; and the influence of Christian motives would be perceptible in the life and conduct of those whom they reformed.

The activity of the leaven was shewn by its diffusing itself into every part of the mass; and the activity of the moral influences of Christianity, by keeping pace with the propagation of the gospel, and producing the same change and renovation both of the principles and practices of mankind, wherever the religion obtained a footing. Still the entire effect of the leaven on the whole mass was produced only in time; and the entire effect of the Christian moral influences on all mankind, could not, in the nature of things, while the religion itself was only gradually propagated in the world, be otherwise than gradually accomplished.

Hence, it was significantly mentioned of the leaven, that as it was buried in the midst of the mass, to work unseen upon it, so it was kept there undisturbed, until it had produced its whole effect. It is

equally true of the moral influences of the gospel, not only that they have been uninterruptedly at work hitherto, since the first promulgation of Christianity, in producing their proper effects on the religious belief and on the moral practice of mankind, but that they must continue to work, as long as the Christian dispensation remains in being. They began to evangelize and spiritualize the world at first; and they cannot cease to do so, until there is no occasion, in the counsels of the divine providence, to evangelize and spiritualize it any longer.

Lastly, the material mass, before the admixture of the leaven with it, was inert and sluggish; distasteful to the senses; and unfit for the purpose of food: but after the introduction of the leaven, was impregnated with new qualities; endued with motion and vivacity; rendered agreeable to the taste; and proper for food and nourishment. In like manner, before the happy change in the moral and spiritual condition of the Gentile world, produced by the gospel dispensation; it was destitute of saving light and knowledge, and still more destitute of quickening grace and corresponding practice; it was besotted with idolatry and superstitions of the grossest kind, and spiritually dead in trespasses and sins: but by that change, its darkness became enlightened with the knowledge of divine truth; its spiritual death was succeeded by a new birth to righteousness and true holiness; the obliterated image of the divine purity was again stamped upon it; and being justified by faith, and sanctified by grace, it was brought as near to God as it had before been estranged from him, and was rendered as dear and well-pleasing to him, as formerly it had been displeasing and inimical.

PARABLES SIXTH AND SEVENTH.
ALLEGORICAL.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND THE PEARL.

MATTHEW XIII. 44, 45, 46.
HARMONY, P. III. 18.

MATTHEW xiii. 44.

“ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a treasure, hid
“ in the field ; the which when a man had found, he hid *it*, and
“ from his joy he goeth, and selleth all *things* soever that he
“ hath, and buyeth that field.”

MATTHEW xiii. 45, 46.

“ ⁴⁵ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant man,
“ seeking goodly pearls : ⁴⁶ who, having found one pearl of
“ great price, went and sold all *things* soever that he had, and
“ bought it.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT is peculiar to the three comparisons, which require to be considered next, that they were spoken not in public, in the audience of the people, but in private, and in the presence of the disciples of our Lord only. It seems a reasonable inference from this fact, that there must have been something in them all, which concerned the apostles or disciples of our Lord, that is, believers in him, particularly, more than the people at large.

The assertion, which we referred to in the consideration of the last parable, that no two parables are found to be strictly the same in their scope and meaning, may appear at first sight more questionable of the two first of these three, than of any others. The kingdom of heaven is compared in the one to a treasure; in the other, to a pearl of great price; and between a treasure and a valuable pearl, there is certainly something in common. The treasure is supposed to be found, and so is the pearl; the treasure makes the fortune of the finder, and so does the pearl; the treasure is to be appropriated by purchase, and so is the pearl; the finder parts with his all, to purchase the treasure, and he parts with his all, to purchase the pearl. These are circumstances of resemblance in the particulars of the two accounts, that *prima facie* render them very much alike; and though the concealed import of these several particulars may after all be different in each case, yet, I think, their apparent identity may properly induce us to class these two parables together, and to treat of them not separately, as we have done of the rest, but in conjunction.

The subject matter of the first in order, is an accidental piece of good fortune, the discovery of a treasure; which though proverbially rare and singular, is neither impossible nor unprecedented. Where money, or other valuables, (as sometimes is the case,) have been buried in the ground, they may sometimes, by such accidents as these, be brought to light and discovered.

It is implied, however, that the existence of the treasure, under the circumstances of the case, is known only to the finder; and therefore, though it

might once have been deposited in the ground by some other person, it must long since have been lost or forgotten. The practice of concealing property, which admitted of concealment, whether underground, or in any manner that was most likely to secure it from danger, was a common one in the East^a. In many instances of such concealment, either all recollection of the place where the property was deposited, might be lost; or the life of its owner, who would otherwise have reclaimed it, might fall a victim to some of the hazards which accompany times of danger and confusion. In such cases, the

^a Hieronym. iii. 569. *ad med.* in Jeremiam, viii: Et quia solebant juxta antiquum morem, aurum, et quædam ornamenta vel mulierum vel virorum in sepulchris condere, hæc quoque frangebat et effodiebat avaritia, ut cælo et luci proderentur.

Treasures of gold were buried in the sepulchre of David, as Josephus tells us, out of which John Hyrcanus took at one time three thousand talents, and Herod, afterwards, attempted, though ineffectually, to take more.

Jeremiah xli. 8: "But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey." Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* x. ix. 4: expresses these things by ἐπιπλά τε καὶ ἐσθῆτας καὶ σῖτον.

Treasures of gold, silver, and other precious effects, were found after the capture of Jerusalem; which their owners had buried in the ground: Joseph. *B. Jud.* vii. v. 2. *ad calc.*

Dio (apud Xiphil.) lxviii. 14. mentions that Decebalus, king of Dacia, in his war with Trajan, buried some of his treasures under the bed of a river, and secreted others, in caves.

Mr. Harmer gives an account from Pococke and D'Herbelot, of the practice still prevalent in the East, of burying property in the ground; which is often lost, or forgotten, and often accidentally brought to light. II. 282, 283. ch. viii. Obs. xl.

Grain in particular is commonly laid up in pits under ground. Harmer, ii. 452. ch. x. obs. xxx.

existence of the treasure would necessarily remain a secret, until some fortunate contingency or other, should make it known; and what is more, no one could claim a property in a treasure so discovered, the original owner of which had long since lost his right to it; and therefore its possession would seem, in all reason, to belong to nobody with more justice than to the party who had been so lucky as to find it^b.

^b Jam neque damnatos metuit jactare ligones
Fossor, et invento, si fors dedit, utitur auro.

Calpurnius, Eclog. iv. 117.

Of treasures actually discovered by accident, the following are instances.

Aristot. *Politica*, v. iii. 2: a treasure was found at Hestiaea in Eubœa, not long after the Persian invasion, by the father of two young men; whose disputing about the possession of it, after his death, led to a *στάσις*, or sedition and division of the whole community.

The great wealth of Herodes Atticus was due to the discovery of a treasure at Athens, by his father Atticus, in the reign of Nerva. The treasure seemed to be too considerable to be retained with safety by a subject. Atticus wrote therefore to the emperor, saying, "I have found, O king, a treasure in my house." *Τί οὖν περὶ αὐτοῦ κελεύεις*; The emperor replied, *Χρῶ οἷς εἶρες*. Atticus wrote again, that it was too great to use. "Why then abuse it"—was the reply: *Παραχρῶ τῷ ἐρμαίῳ· σὸν γάρ ἐστιν*. Philostratus, *de Vitis Sophist.* ii. Herodes Atticus. 546. C.

Chrysostom mentions a matter of fact, which he says had happened *ἐκ παλαιῶν*. The owner of a field, which contained a treasure unknown to him, sold it. The buyer, upon cultivating the field, discovered the treasure. The former owner laid claim to the treasure; saying he had sold the field, but not the treasure. The buyer resisted the claim: and so they went to law about it. *In Nov. Test.* iii. 367. B: in *Acta Apost.* xix. Hom. xli.

Philostratus has a story something like this, in his *Life of*

It is implied that when the finder makes the discovery, he is at work on some ordinary field employment: (and hence, in the original, the use of the article in speaking of the field:) a circumstance, which is of service in accounting for the fact of such a discovery, with the least offence to probability. And hence, his concealing the knowledge of his discovery from all but himself—his going immediately, in the height of his joy, and selling all he is worth, to purchase the field which contains the treasure, and so to make it his own—are very natural circumstances, that require no explanation except to suppose that the field, beforehand, is the property of some other person, and the discovery of the treasure, though an effect of the personal good fortune of the finder, and capable of being turned to his personal advantage, is yet first made in the field of another.

The subject matter of the second parable is a discovery of Apollonius of Tyana, ii. 15. 103. B. He supposes his hero called in, on a certain occasion, as *amicus curiæ*, to assist the decision of a judge in a disputed right to the property of a treasure, found in a field which one person had sold to another; and to which they both laid claim. By Apollonius' advice, it was adjudged to him who had the better character of the two, and was likely to make the best use of his good fortune; and that happened to be the buyer.

Lib. vi. 16. of the same Life, he tells us a story of the way in which this same Apollonius put a pot or *ἀμφορεύς*, containing three thousand darics (a gold coin worth about half a guinea) into possession of a poor man, who had nothing to portion off his daughters with. It was previously concealed in the ground, under a beehive.

We learn from the same account, that they who wished to discover an hidden treasure, used previously to sacrifice to Tellus.

covery also, but the discovery of a pearl; not that of a treasure as such. And this discovery is not, like the last, attributed to accident, but to a research, previously instituted to find the very thing which at last is seen to be met with. The estimation of the pearl in ancient times, when the diamond, though not unknown, nor less valuable than at present, was still comparatively rare; the prodigious size and beauty of some which are mentioned and described in classical authors; the corresponding admiration in which they were held, and the enormous prices, which, it may be shewn, were paid for them: are sufficient to give an air of probability to the supposed matter of fact, and to make a research or inquiry after pearls, and pearls of the best sort, a very natural and likely circumstance.

It is of little importance in what quarter, the party who institutes this search after pearls, is supposed to look for them; except that it must of course be some quarter where such natural curiosities were to be found^c. What parts of the ancient

^c Of the locality of the pearl, in ancient times—of its use—and of its value—the following particulars may tend to illustrate the parable, and will perhaps not be uninteresting to the classical reader.

First of the locality. Tacitus, *Vita Agricolæ*, 12. Fert Britannia aurum et argentum et alia metalla, pretium victoriae. gignit et oceanus margarita, sed subfusca ac liventia. quidam artem abesse legentibus arbitrantur. nam in rubro mari viva ac spirantia saxis avelli, in Britannia, prout expulsa sint, conligi. ego facilius crediderim, naturam margaritis deesse, quam nobis avaritiam—Julius Cæsar's invasion of Britain, is said to have been produced, *Spe margaritarum, quarum amplitudinem conferentem, interdum sua manu exegisse pondus.* Suet.

world these were most likely to be, and whether more or less contiguous to Judæa, will appear from

Jul. 47, 1—Pliny tells us that he dedicated a *thorax*, or habergeon, made of pearls of Britain, in the temple of Venus Genetrix. H. N. ix. 57.

Nota Caledoniis talis pictura Britannis,
Cum virides algas, et rubra corallia nudat
Æstus, et albentes concharum germina baccas,
Delicias hominum locupletum, quæque sub undis
Adsimilant nostros imitata monilia cultus.

Ausonius, Idyll. x. 68.

Theophrastus, De Lapidibus, Opera, 396. *ad med.* mentions India, and the islands in the Red sea, as the places where pearls were found: Nearchus, apud Strabon. xvi. iii. 7. 387. the islands in the Persian gulf; and likewise Androstenes, and Isidore of Charax, apud Athenæum, iii. 45, 46. Pliny, H. N. ix. 54—57: Britain, the Thracian Bosphorus, the coast of Epirus, the coast of Mauritania, the *Sinus Arabicus*, the Red sea, and the islands in the Persian gulf: Julius Solinus, Polyh. liii. 23—30: Britain, and especially India: Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. xxiv. *ad fin.* India, the Red sea, and Britain: Tertullian, iii. 42. De Habitu Mulierum, 6: 224. De Resurrectione, 7: Britain, India, Scythia, the Red sea: Philostratus, Vita Apoll. Tyan. iii. 15, 16: an island, which he calls Byblus, and other localities in the Red sea: Dionysius Periegetes, 316—319: 780—782: 1011—1013: 1103—1106: 1118—1121: enumerates various places, where precious stones of different kinds were to be found, but more particularly the coast of the Pontus, and of the Red sea.

It is, however, certain that the most valuable pearls were supposed to be those, which came from the Red sea, or from India. It is to these that the allusions, so common in the poets, occur.

Nec tibi gemmarum quidquid felicibus Indis
Nascitur, Eoi qua maris unda rubet. Tib. ii. 11—15.

O pereat, quicumque legit viridesque smaragdus,
Et niveam Tyrio murice tinguit ovem.

Hic dat avaritiæ caussas, et Coa, puellis,
Vestis, et a rubro lucida concha mari. Ibid. iv. 27.

Quidve

the information subjoined in the note below. The party in the parable is described as a merchant, or

Quidve in Erythræo legitur quæ littore concha,
Tinctaque Sidonio murice lana juvat? Tib. iii. iii. 17.

Et quascunque niger rubro de littore conchas
Proximus Eois colligit Indus aquis. iv. ii. 19.

Hanc ego non auro, non Indis flectere conchis,
Sed potui blandi carminis eloquio. Propertius, i. viii. 39.

Tunc mihi Pactoli veniunt sub tecta liquores,
Et legitur rubris gemma sub æquoribus. Ibid. xiv. 11.

Semper in oceanum mittit me quærere gemmas,
Et jubet ex ipsa tollere dona Tyro. ii. xvi. 17.

Si te, Eoa, Doruxanium, juvat aurea ripa,
Et quæ sub Tyria concha superbit aqua. iv. v. 21.

Vos quoque non caris aures onerate lapillis,
Quos legit in viridi decolor Indus aqua.
Ovid. De Art. Am. iii. 129.

Induitis collo lapides Oriente paratos,
Et quantos oneri est aure tulisse duos.
Medicamina faciei, 21.

Nec medius tenues conchas, pictosve lapillos
Pontus habet: bibuli littoris illa mora est. Amor. ii. xi. 13.

Cf. Hor. Epp. i. x. 19—Ovid. De Arte Amandi, iii. 123, 124: Nux Elegia, 141, 142—Lucan. vi. 677, 678: x. 139, 140—Stattius, Silvarum i. ii. 128, 129: iii. iii. 92—Claudian. De Tertio Consul. Honorii, 209, 210: De Quarto Cons. Hon. 585—601: Epistola ad Serenam, 13, 14: Eidyll. v. 14, 15.

The natural history of the pearl, as far as it was known to the ancients, may be found in the passages above cited; to which we may add, Clemens Alexandrinus, i. 241. 25—36. Pædagog, ii. 12—Basil. i. 95. A. B. in Hexaëmeron Hom. vii. Solinus, Polyh. cap. 15. 23. ad fin. gives an account of the emerald and the crystal: and Philostratus, Vita Apoll. *loc. cit.* describes an oyster, which gave birth to a kind of bastard pearl, from the ἰχθῶρ, or blood of the fish, hardening when caught, and exposed to the air; and also of the mode of its capture, by the Indian fishermen.

else as a traveller, (*ἔμπορος*;) who visits other countries in quest of pearls; and he is supposed to pur-

By far the most interesting passage on this subject, however, is the following from Origen, in his commentary on the parable, iii. 448. C. Comm. in Matt. tom. x. 7: which, notwithstanding its length, I shall take the liberty of subjoining.

Εὕρομεν οὖν παρὰ τοῖς περὶ λίθων πραγματευσαμένοις περὶ τῆς φύσεως τοῦ μαργαρίτου ταῦτα, ὅτι τῶν μαργαριτῶν οἱ μὲν εἰσι χερσαῖοι, οἱ δὲ θαλάττιοι· καὶ οἱ μὲν χερσαῖοι παρ' Ἰνδοῖς μόνοις γίνονται, πρέποντες σφραγίσαι καὶ σφενδόνας καὶ ὄρμοις· οἱ δὲ θαλάττιοι, οἱ μὲν διαφέροντες παρὰ τοῖς αὐτοῖς Ἰνδοῖς εὐρίσκονται, οἷτινές εἰσι καὶ ἄριστοι, ἐν τῇ ἐρυθρᾷ θαλάσῃ γινόμενοι· δευτερεύουσι δὲ ὡς ἐν μαργαρίταις οἱ ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ Βρεττανίαν ὠκεανοῦ λαμβανόμενοι· τρίτοι δὲ καὶ ἀπολειπόμενοι, οὐ μόνον τῶν πρώτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν δευτέρων, οἱ κατὰ Βόσπορον, περὶ τὴν Σκυθίαν εὐρισκόμενοι.

Ἔτι δὲ ταῦτα ἐλέγετο περὶ τοῦ Ἰνδικοῦ μαργαρίτου, ὅτι ἐν κόγχῃσι γίνεται προσεικόσι τὴν φύσιν εὐμεγέθεσι στρόμβοις· οὗτοι δὲ ἱστοροῦνται οἰονεὶ κατὰ Ἰλας τὴν θαλάττιον ποιούμενοι νομῆν, καθάπερ ἀγελάρχου τινὸς ἐξηγουμένου, περιόπτου τὴν χροάν καὶ τὸ μέγεθος, καὶ διαφέροντος τῶν ὑπ' αὐτὸν· ὥστε ἀναλογίαν αὐτὸν ἔχειν τῷ καλουμένῳ ἐσσηνι μελισσῶν.

Ἰστορήται δὲ καὶ περὶ τῆς θήρας τῶν διαφερόντων, τουτέστι τῶν ἐν Ἰνδία, τοιοῦτον· ὅτι περιλαμβάνοντες οἱ ἐπιχώριοι δικτύοις κύκλον αἰγιαλοῦ μέγαν, κατακολυμῶσιν, ἓνα ἐξ ἀπάντων τὸν προηγούμενον ἐπιτηδεύοντες λαβεῖν· τούτου γὰρ ἀλόγτος φασὶν ἄμοχθον γενέσθαι τὴν θήραν τῆς ὑπὸ τούτῳ ἀγέλης, οὐδενὸς ἔτι ἀτρεμουῦντος τῶν ὑπ' (fors. ἐπ') αὐτῆς, ἀλλ' οἶον δεδεμένου ἱμάντι, καὶ ἐπομένου τῷ ἀγελάρχῃ.

Λέγεται δὲ καὶ ἡ γένεσις τοῦ ἐν Ἰνδία μαργαρίτου χρόνοις συνίστασθαι, τροπὰς λαμβάνοντος τοῦ ζώου πλείονας, καὶ μεταβολὰς, ἕως τελειωθῆ.

Ἔτι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἱστορήται, ὅτι διοίγεται ὁ κόγχος χάσμη παραπλησίως ὁ τοῦ φέροντος τὸν μαργαρίτην ζῶον, καὶ διοιχθεὶς τὴν οὐράνιον εἰς ἐυτήν δέχεται δρόσον· ἧς ἐμπλησθεὶς καθαρᾶς καὶ ἀβολώτου περιανγῆς γίνεται, καὶ λοχεύει μέγαν καὶ εὐρυθμον τὸν λίθον· εἰ δὲ ποτε ἐπηχλυμένης, καὶ ἀνωμάλου χειμερίου τε μεταλάβῃ δρόσου, ὀμιχλώδη κύει μαργαρίτην, καὶ κηλίσιν ἐπίμωμον.

Ἔτι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο εὕρομεν, ὅτι εἰ μεσολαβηθείη ὀδεύων ἐπὶ τὴν πληρωσιν οὐ κύει λίθου ὑπὸ ἀστραπῆς μύει, καὶ ὡσπερὶ τῷ δείματι σκορπίζει καὶ διαχεῖ τὸν γόνον εἰς τὰ λεγόμενα φυσήματα. ἔστι δὲ ὅτε καθάπερ ἡλιτόμηνα γεννᾶται βραχεία, καὶ ἀχλύς τι ἔχοντα, πλὴν εὐρυθμα.

Ἔτι

chase his pearls, not to find them himself: which is sufficient to distinguish him from one of those, who

"Ἐτι δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ἔχει ὁ Ἰνδικὸς μαργαρίτης παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, λευκὸς ἔστι τὴν χροάν, ἀργυρῶ διαφανεῖ προσφερῆς, αὐγὴν τε ὑποχλωρίζουσιν ἡρέμα διαλάμπειν, ὡς ἐπίπαν δὲ σχῆμα ἔχει στρογγύλον· ἔστι δὲ καὶ τρυφεροχρῶς, καὶ ἀπαλώτερος ἢ κατὰ λίθον. οὕτως δὲ ἔστιν ἐπιτερπῆς ἰδέσθαι, ὡς καὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἐμφανεστέροις, καθὰ ὁ ἀναγράψας ἔλεγε περὶ τῶν λίθων, ἀφυμνεῖσθαι.

"Ἐτι καὶ τοῦτο σημεῖόν ἐστιν ἀρίστου μαργαρίτου, τὸ τὴν περιφέρειαν τετορνευμένην ἔχειν, καὶ τὸ χρῶμα λευκώτατον, καὶ διανυγέστατον, καὶ τῶ μεγέθει μέγιστον.

Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν περὶ τοῦ Ἰνδικοῦ. ὁ δὲ κατὰ Βρεττανίαν, φασὶ, χρυσωπὸς μὲν ἔστι τὴν ἐπίχροϊαν, ὀμιχλώδης δὲ τις, καὶ ταῖς μαρμαρυγαῖς ἀμβλύτερος. ὁ δὲ ἐν τῷ πορθμῶ τῷ κατὰ Βόσπορον, κνεφωδέστερος τοῦ Βρεττανικοῦ, καὶ πελιδνός, καὶ τέλειον ἀμυδρὸς, ἀπαλός τε καὶ μακρομεγέθης. καὶ γεννᾶται δὲ ὁ ἐν τῷ κατὰ Βόσπορον πορθμῶ, οὐκ ἐν ταῖς πίνας, ὅ ἐστιν ὀστράκων εἶδος μαργαριτοφόρον, ἀλλ' ἐν τοῖς προσαγορευμένοις μυσί. τούτοις δὲ, λέγω δὴ τοῖς κατὰ Βόσπορον, ἡ νομὴ ἐν τέλμασιν ἔστιν.

Ἰστόρηται δὲ καὶ τέταρτον γένος εἶναι μαργαριτῶν, περὶ τὴν Ἀκαρνανίαν ἐν ταῖς τῶν ὀστρέων πίνας. οὐ σπουδαῖοι δὲ οὗτοι ἄγαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄρρυθμοί, καὶ τὸ σχῆμα, καὶ τὸ χρῶμα τέλειον διατεθολωμένοι καὶ ῥυπῶντες. καὶ ἄλλοι δὲ παρὰ τούτοις εἰσὶ περὶ τὴν αὐτὴν Ἀκαρνανίαν, πάντων ἐνέκεν ἀπόβλητοι.

Heliodorus describes a collection of goodly pearls, in his *Æthiopica*, ii. 30: *προκομίσας ἐπεδείκνυ λίθων πολυτίμων ὑπερφνές τι χρῆμα. μαργαρίδες τε γὰρ ἐνήσαν, εἰς καρύου μικροῦ μέγεθος, εἰς κύκλον τε ἀκριβῶς ἀπαρτιζόμεναι, καὶ λευκότητι πλείστον ἀγλαϊζόμεναι, σμάραγδοί τε καὶ ὑάκινθοι, κ', τ. λ.* One pearl as such, too, is alluded to by Clemens Alexandrinus, i. 325. 31—35. Strom. i. 1: ii. 1014. 15—20. in Matt. xii. 46: but apparently in a metaphorical sense, or with a special reference to the parable.

Pliny tells us, ix. 56. that pearls were called, in the Latin, *uniones*, because no two of them could be found alike; they were all uniques of their kind. He says also: *Dos omnibus in candore, magnitudine, orbe, lævove, pondere, haud promptis rebus:* so that it might well require both taste and skill, the gift of experience, to distinguish the best.

The *adamas* or diamond was certainly not unknown to the

by their employment, are known as the fishers of pearls, or divers into the sea in search of the shells

ancients, nor was its value unappreciated by them; as appears from Pliny H. N. xxxvii. 15. Its scarceness, however, and costliness both, rendered it not so fit to be the subject of a familiar comparison, like that in the parable, as the pearl. There is a *locus classicus*, in reference to it also; Hieronym. iii. 1435. *ad med.*: where Jerome is quoting from Xenocrates, De Lapidum Gemmarumque Naturis. It describes its nature, appearance, properties, and the like; and enumerates four varieties of it, the Indian, the Arabian, the Macedonian, and the Cyprian; each possessing more or less of the excellence of a common nature, *pro qualitate regionum*.

The use of the pearl was restricted chiefly to that of an ornament of the person; more particularly of the dress of females.

Μύρον, γύναι, γενοίμην,

ὅπως ἐγὼ σ' ἀλείψω.

καὶ ταινίη δὲ μαστῶν,

καὶ μάργαρον τραχήλῳ,

καὶ σάνδαλον γενοίμην,

μόνον ποσὶν πατεῖν με.

Anacreon, xx. 11.

Nec minus Eois pectus variare lapillis,

Ut formosa novo quæ parat ire viro. Propertius, i. xv. 7.

Sive vagi crines puris in frontibus errant,

Indica quos medio vertice gemma tenet. ii. xxii. 11.

Auferimur cultu: gemmis auroque teguntur

Omnia. pars minima est ipsa puella sui.

Ovid. De Remedio Amoris, 343.

Cf. Tibullus, i. i. 51, 52—Propertius, ii. xvi. 43, 44—Horatius, Carm. iv. xiii. 13—16—Virgil, Æneid. i. 654, 655—Ovidius, Amor. i. ii. 41, 42: Ars Amandi, i. 251, 252.

Atque illa feminarum propria, says Tiberius, (Tac. Ann. iii. 53.) in his letter to the senate, on the subject of a new sumptuary law, quîs, lapidum causa, pecuniæ nostræ ad externas aut hostiles gentes transferuntur?—Quare uxor tua, asks Seneca, De Vita Beata, xvii. 2: locupletis domus censum auribus gerit?—And again, De Beneficiis, vii. ix. 4: Video uniones, non

which contain them. His proper character is that of a collector of pearls, and probably of a trader in them; though this is no necessary supposition.

singulos singulis auribus comparatos: jam enim exercitatæ aures oneri ferendo sunt: junguntur inter se, et insuper alii binis superponuntur. non satis muliebris insania viros subjecerat, nisi bina ac terna patrimonia auribus singulis pependissent. Cf. Plin. H. N. ix. 56.

Nil non permittit mulier sibi: turpe putat nil
Cum virides gemmas collo circumdedit, et cum
Auribus extentis magnos commisit elenchos.

Juvenal, vi. 456.

The nature of these *elenchi* (a species of pearl) is explained by the Scholiast *in locum*, and by Pliny, H. N. ix. 56.

Pliny informs us from Fenestella, that the introduction of pearls into general use at Rome was contemporary with the capture of Alexandria, U. C. 724: but he corrects a mistake of the same writer, that pearls were first exhibited there (and then only *minuti et viles*) about the time of Sylla: quum Ælius Stilo, as he observes, Jugurthino bello unionum nomen impositum maxime grandibus margaritis prodat. Julius Cæsar (Suet. Jul. 43, 5.) prohibited their use, except to certain ages and persons, at certain times. But, notwithstanding, to what excess the luxury of the times had been carried in this one article of finery, the writings of Seneca and Pliny abundantly testify. See especially, Plin. H. N. ix. 53—59: xxxiii. 12—Seneca De Beneficiis, ii. xi. 1—Cf. Philo Jud. ii. 455. 38—44. Quod liber, quisquis virtuti studet. Nor are the Christian writers less loud in their complaints of the luxury and effeminacy, still prevailing in the same respects. See Clemens Alex. loc. cit—Tertullian, iii. 42. De Habitu muliebri, 6, 7—Basil. i. 398. C. Homilia in Ditescentes.

With regard to the costliness of pearls, in ancient times: Androstheneſ, apud Athenæum, iii. 45. tells us of a sort of pearl among the Indians, produced by an oyster, called in their language Berberi, that was sold for its weight in gold.

The two largest pearls ever known, according to Pliny, were both in possession of Cleopatra queen of Egypt, and worn by her as ornaments. Each of these was valued at H. S. centies

The object, however, of his researches from the first, is not pearls of any description, whether bet- (10,000,000 of sesterces, about 80,000*l.*) One she dissolved in a certain *menstruum*, and drank off, at a supper which she gave to M. Antony: the other was brought to Rome by Augustus, and was divided into two, which were attached as pendants to the ears of the statue of Venus in the Pantheon. See Pliny, H. N. ix. 58. Macrob. Saturn. ii. 13.

Æsopus the younger, son of Æsopus the actor, whom Pliny calls Clodius, dissolved in vinegar, and drank off a pearl, which Horace values at *decies solidum* (1,000,000 sesterces, about 8000*l.*) Hor. Serm. ii. iii. 239—241. Cf. Tertull. v. 217. De Pallio, 5. Pliny and Valerius Maximus, tell us he would often oblige his guests with similar potions: Valerius Maximus, ix. i. 2—Plin. H. N. ix. 59. The same thing is related of the emperor Caius: Suet. Cai. 37, 1.

Julius Cæsar presented his mistress Servilia, the mother of Brutus, with a pearl worth *sexagies* (6,000,000 sesterces, 48,000*l.*;) Suet. Jul. 50, 3. Augustus dedicated at one time in the treasury of Jupiter Capitolinus, jewels and pearls to the value of *quingenties H. S.* (50,000,000 of sesterces, 400,000*l.*) Pliny tells us, he himself had seen Lollia Paulina, the granddaughter of M. Lollius, and queen of Caius Cæsar, on an occasion that required no great display of finery, covered with pearls and emeralds, worth *quadringenties H. S.* (40,000,000, about 320,000*l.*) H. N. ix. 58. Cf. Solini Polyh. liii. 29, 30. Vitellius pawned a pearl, taken from one of the ears of his mother, to pay the expenses of his journey, U. C. 821. to take possession of his province. Suet. Vitell. 7, 3.

Lampridius mentions an anecdote of Alexander Severus: *Quum quidam legatus uniones duos uxori ejus per ipsum attulisset magni ponderis et inusitatæ mensuræ, vendi eos jussit: qui quum pretium non invenirent, ne exemplum malum a regina nasceretur, si eo uteretur quod emi non posset, in auribus Veneris eos diceavit.* Vita, cap. 51.

Photius, in his abstract from Procopius, (Codex, 63. p. 22. line 10, 11. *ad sinistram*,) tells us of a famous pearl, a crown jewel of the kings of Persia, which Perozis, the king at the time, wore in his ear, when he fell in battle with the Huns. The pearl was lost at the same time.

ter or worse ; but goodly pearls, in particular : and therefore the subject of his discovery at last, and the object of his selection in consequence of the discovery, is naturally specified as *one* pearl, but of great price. The selection of this one in particular, because of its peculiar size and beauty, supposes further the rejection beforehand, of all others, for their comparative inferiority in the same respects ; and consequently, that many perhaps, passed in review before him, and were offered to his choice, before he fixed upon this.

It appears, too, that the single value of this one pearl was equivalent to every thing which he before was worth ; whether of the same kind, or not : and therefore, that though to purchase and secure this one pearl, he parts with the rest of his property, and perhaps with all his other pearls, he is no loser by the exchange ; he has obtained possession of that which is worth them all.

THE MORAL.

It must be evident from the above review of the circumstances of these two accounts, that the immediate drift and purpose of the one is merely to shew, by what means a certain individual became possessed of a valuable treasure : and that of the other, to shew in like manner, how he became possessed of a valuable pearl. As they both, then, obviously turn on the good fortune and advantage of an individual, in the first instance—we may justly conclude that, if they have any further scope and meaning, it will be something eminently *personal*, or such as to concern individuals more than communities, or communities only as they are made up

of individuals. Hence, though the kingdom of heaven is the counterpart of the material image in both, and the kingdom of heaven in some such sense as is capable of answering both to the treasure on the one hand, and to the pearl on the other; it must still be in some sense eminently personal; it must be as capable of answering to some instance of the personal good fortune, and the proper advantage of individuals, in each case.

The kingdom of heaven, however, is directly compared to the treasure in the one, and indirectly only to the pearl in the other, directly, to the person who is searching for and supposed to find it. This distinction may be accidental—and easily to be rectified, without affecting the question what is meant by the phrase, kingdom of heaven, in this second instance. Yet whether the counterpart, denoted by this phrase, can properly be the same thing, as answering to the treasure and to the pearl respectively, must be determined only by a minute comparison of the circumstances of the case in each instance, and more especially of what concerns the leading or characteristic point—because that upon which the good fortune of the individual turns—the manner in which the treasure and the pearl are supposed respectively to be found, and to come into possession of their owners.

To enter upon this comparison—we may observe in the first place, that the subject matter of the discovery in the one case, is not exactly the same as that of the discovery in the other. Between a treasure concealed in a field, and a pearl however rare and curious, there is no further resemblance or analogy, than of the most general kind, as between

one article of value and another ; between one thing not often to be met with and another.

There is still less analogy in the circumstances under which either of these things, though equally valuable and equally rare with the other, is capable of being acquired, or may possibly come into the possession of a certain person. No one would think of looking, on purpose, after treasures buried in the ground, whose existence he has no reason to suspect ; nor if he had, would he know where to search for them, or how to find a clue to their discovery. But any one might reasonably enough undertake a research after pearls ; which he may always expect to meet with, either in the market among the wares of the merchant, or in the places where nature produces them, and where the labour of those who make it their business to explore the sea in quest of pearls, is frequently rewarded with success.

The discovery of a concealed treasure, then, must in the first instance, be the effect of chance ; but the discovery of a valuable pearl may be the natural result of proper inquiry and investigation. The party therefore, who made the discovery of the treasure, was supposed to be employed at the time, on his usual business in the field ; neither desiring, nor expecting any such discovery, because totally unconscious of the existence of any thing to be discovered : but the party who meets with the pearl, was supposed to be beforehand, in quest of pearls ; and consequently, neither unsolicitous about the discovery, since he had an object in view by making it, nor unprepared for any such result, since he was taking the steps which in all likelihood would lead to it at last. The acquisition of the treasure, then,

was an eminent instance of good fortune ; but that of the pearl, of the natural success of diligence and pains, wisely directed.

Moreover, where the discovery of a treasure is concerned, there is no room for comparison or choice of any kind ; the finder has no such option as between selecting one thing and rejecting another, of the same kind : he must either appropriate and take possession of what he has found, if it is worth the while, or he must let it alone, as worthy of no further notice. But in becoming master of a pearl of superior price, there would be need not only of assiduity and diligence to discover it, but of judgment and discrimination to recognise it, and of selection and preference to part with every thing else to obtain it. It was not without reason therefore, that one pearl only was spoken of, but one pearl of superior value, and consequently of exquisite beauty and corresponding rarity : for the mention of only one such, opposes it to all besides, and the peculiar fineness and estimation of this one imply the inferior beauty and value of all besides. The exclusive selection of this one, on the score of superior excellence, implies in like manner, the total rejection of all others, on the score of comparative defect. But neither could the superior excellence of one pearl, nor the comparative inferiority of other pearls, be judged of by any one who knew nothing of the nature and properties of pearls, or what it is which constitutes their excellence or their defect respectively ; nor could one pearl be preferred to all others, as singly equivalent to the rest, if there were not a number to choose from, or more to be set in competition with it.

The moral of the former parable may consequently, very well be designed to illustrate a piece of good-fortune, in one of its most appropriate instances, the discovery of an hidden treasure; but more than an instance of good-fortune, it cannot be designed to illustrate. The personal behaviour of the agent, under the circumstances of the discovery, is no part of the instance of his good-fortune; nor as far as that is concerned, primarily to be taken into account. It is no more than was necessary to give effect to his good-fortune itself; no more than the natural consequence of the discovery; without which, the discovery would have been of no use to him, and his good-fortune no good-fortune at all. In making the discovery, he is entirely passive; it is after the discovery, and with a view to profit by the discovery, that he begins to act for himself. But the discovery he owes to chance; and what was the effect of chance could not in the slightest degree be due to himself. The ancients were so sensible of the influence of some other principle in such effects as these, beyond their own power or foresight, that as they ascribed almost every thing that befell them, to some particular divinity or other, supposed to preside over those contingencies; so they referred such instances of personal good-fortune as the discovery of hidden treasures, to the express interposition of Mercury, or Hercules^d, in behalf of the individual who found them.

^d Thus we have in Persius, Satir. ii. 10.

. . . . Et, ô si

Sub rastro crepet argenti mihi seria, dextro
Hercule!

And

But the moral of the second parable cannot strictly propose any such object as the mere personal good-fortune of a certain individual; or if it did, would it be exclusively confined to that. If the discovery of the pearl at last, is as much the result of pains and labour, previously bestowed on the research, as of a fortunate concurrence of circumstances, by which the progress of the research is successfully directed to the discovery; the end of the account cannot be exclusively to set forth and illustrate a piece of good-fortune, merely. Or should it be considered the good-fortune of the merchant, which brings him in contact with one such particular pearl as he was previously in quest of; still the sagacity which he shews in recognising this one, as what he was most anxious to meet with; and the preference which he

And in Horace, Serm. ii. vi. 10.

O si urnam argenti fors quæ mihi monstret! ut illi,
 Thesaurο invento qui mercenarius agrum
 Illum ipsum mercatus aravit, dives amico
 Hercule.

On which the *Vetus Scholiasta*: *Mercenario cuidam per quietem traditur Hercules thesaurum demonstrasse.* And again: *Ideo quia thesauris præest, (sc. Hercules) (et) sunt qui eundem Incubonem esse velint, unde putant quod res rustica in tutela sit ejus.*

The case here supposed, of one's finding a treasure in a field which he was employed, as an hired labourer, in tilling at the time, and his going and buying the field for the sake of the treasure, is just the case implied in the parable.

Lucian in his *Timon*, 41. opera i. 152. supposes the god *Thesaurus* purposely to be thrown into the way of *Timon*, by the instrumentality of *Mercury* and *Plutus*.

Phornutus, *Περὶ τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ*, observes: "Ἐν τε ἀνθρώποις πᾶσι, καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς θεοῖς, ὁπόταν τις εὕρη τι προάγων ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, σύννηθες ἐπιφθέγγεσθαι Κοινὸν εἶναι τῷ Ἑρμῇ, ὃς δὴ συνίσταται ἐστὶ τῆς εὐρέσεως, ἐνόδιος ὢν.

evinces in fixing upon this one, to the exclusion of all others, must clearly be designed to illustrate his wisdom, discernment, and predilection—qualities very different from mere personal good-fortune.

These considerations, in my opinion, are sufficient to establish a difference in the moral import of the two comparisons, respectively; and therefore in the particular point of view under which the kingdom of heaven, the common counterpart of both, is to be regarded in each case also. The object of the comparison, which personifies the kingdom of heaven by a treasure concealed in a field, must be to describe the gospel dispensation, as it concerns individual Christians, by some characteristic circumstance or property of the gospel scheme, with regard to which they themselves are entirely passive, at first at least, if not throughout: but the object of the other, which represents it by the one pearl of inestimable value, must be to describe it, with the same reference to individuals, by some characteristic circumstance or property, with regard to which they themselves are not entirely passive, neither at first, nor ever afterwards. There may consequently be a very intimate connexion between them, and one of them may even take up the same subject where the other leaves it off: but there will still be a conceivable difference in their proper scope and import, and the moral of either will be capable of standing, as an independent moral, by itself.

To the first of these descriptions, that is, to the idea of the kingdom of heaven as represented by the treasure, I think it may be shewn, will correspond the privilege of becoming a Christian: and to the second, in which the kingdom of heaven is adum-

brated by the pearl, the profession of Christianity, or the continuing a Christian, on principle.

THE INTERPRETATION.

By the privilege of becoming a Christian, I understand the acceptance of the first offer of Christianity, the option of the gospel terms of salvation: an offer and an option, which would consequently, be inseparable from the being and promulgation of Christianity itself; but could have no existence until it began to be preached. Between this privilege, and the material description in the parable, the following analogies may be pointed out.

First, as the subject of the description, there, was the finding of a treasure in a literal sense; so the acceptance of the first offer of Christianity, the option of the gospel terms of salvation, is the finding of a treasure in a spiritual sense. For if we consider both the immediate benefits and the future advantages, which may be the consequences of the belief, the acceptance, and the profession of Christianity; not merely in the spiritual privileges which it secures to its professors in this life, but much more in the great and glorious prospects, which it opens to their view, and on certain conditions of faith and obedience in the present life, pledges to their enjoyment, in a future one; surely the privilege of becoming a Christian is the greatest which can be proposed to our option: the blessings and promises, present or to come, which are inseparably attached to the reception and profession of the gospel, are the most valuable treasure, which can fall to the possession of any one.

The treasure was concealed before it was found;

and for ought which appears to the contrary, had been concealed an indefinite length of time. The gospel dispensation, in which was included the privilege of becoming a Christian, is spoken of as a *mystery* or *secret*; and a mystery or secret of no small duration; but one, whose concealment, before the proper time when it was brought to light, reached as far back as the foundation of the world. The gospel dispensation, too, had no actual being until the fulness of time—or the arrival of that period in the history of the world when the promulgation of Christianity took place: nor could the option of the gospel terms of salvation, the privilege of embracing Christianity, be proposed to any until the arrival of the same period.

The finding of the treasure was the effect of accident, was the result at least of contingencies, over which the finder himself had no control. In like manner, the dispensation of the gospel, with every privilege, which by the acceptance of Christianity it entailed, considered both in its original and in its consummation, was independent of human concurrence; was entirely the effect of the will and counsel of God.

The finding of the treasure was something which concerned an individual; and from the nature of the case, could concern none but an individual. And the gospel dispensation, as involving the privilege of becoming Christians, must necessarily concern individuals more than communities, or communities only as they consist of individuals. If there is any one thing more personal than another, it is the business of every man's own salvation, who is a responsible agent and endued with a reasonable soul; a

business, which does not cease to be individually concerning to every one of us, because it is equally so to the rest; but becomes generally concerning to all, because it is personally so to each.

The discovery of the treasure was consequently, an instance of the proper good-fortune of the finder; and the privilege of becoming a Christian, the option of the gospel terms of salvation, to whomsoever and whensoever they may befall, including as they do, so many singular personal benefits, present and to come, which may possibly redound from their acceptance—by being placed within the reach of individuals, rightly considered—is an instance of their personal good-fortune, and an effect of the favour of divine Providence in their behalf; which does not cease to be so to them, by being shared with many others, or not being more personally interesting to themselves, than it is to all besides, who are in the same situation as themselves.

The finder of a treasure, with regard to the first effect of the cause which places its enjoyment in his power, is necessarily passive: and so were all mankind, whether communities or individuals, with regard to the first option of the gospel terms of salvation, the privilege of accepting or rejecting the offer of Christianity itself. The finder of a treasure, however, has no alternative left him in respect of the use to be made of his good-fortune, except to avail himself of it, or to neglect it altogether: nor could there be any medium between accepting the offer of the gospel terms of salvation, as made to any, or declining it. A man, to whose option the privilege of becoming a Christian has fallen, cannot both become and not become a Christian, at the

same time ; and consequently, can have nothing to choose between embracing and retaining the offer, or rejecting and losing it, at once.

Were one, however, in whose power his good-fortune had placed a valuable acquisition, not to avail himself eagerly of it ; were he to let slip the opportunity of providing for his own advantage, by indifference or negligence merely : he would be considered wanting in a proper regard to his own interest—and his conduct would be censured as culpably foolish and imprudent. Whosoever, in like manner, should deliberately forego the option of the gospel terms of salvation, the privilege of becoming and continuing a Christian, with the inestimable benefits which would thereby be engaged to him—when that option and privilege were placed at his disposal ; he would be more insensible to his present and his future welfare, and would be guilty of greater folly and indiscretion, than the sacrifice of any lawful temporal advantage, however culpable, could imply him to be.

The finder of the treasure was naturally, therefore, impatient to profit by his good-fortune, and lost no time in taking the most effectual measures and precautions, to make it his own : disguising the knowledge of his discovery from all besides himself ; parting with all he was worth before ; and buying the field, which contained so rich a prize, at any price. In like manner, it is both the wisdom and the duty of every one, to whom the privilege of becoming a Christian upon the gospel terms of salvation, has once been proposed, to accept the offer with joy and thankfulness ; as the greatest and most desirable of all acquisitions that could

have fallen in his way : and whatever sacrifices it may require either to gain or to keep possession of it, to think nothing too much for the purchase, when more will be obtained by the property ; and the loss which may be incurred in the present life, for the kingdom of heaven's sake, will be repaid many times over again, in the kingdom of heaven, hereafter.

By the profession of the gospel on principle, I understand not merely the conviction of the truth of Christianity, as a revelation which proceeds directly from God, (for that must be the foundation of its reception and profession, under all circumstances,) but the practical sense and persuasion of the cogency of its motives, the solidity of its assurances, the extent and grandeur of its prospects, the dignity and all-sufficiency of its proper ends and pursuits, in comparison of every thing besides, which can actuate our conduct, engage our affections, animate our hopes, or constitute the object of our aims and wishes.

This experience of the practical excellence of the Christian principle is necessarily posterior to the reception of the first offer of the gospel, and the consequent first profession of Christianity ; and therefore, the object of the present comparison, which confines itself to the illustration of this excellence, is so far not only distinct from that of the preceding, which proposed to exemplify the nature and character of the gospel overture as such, but in the train and order of ideas is associated with it. Nor can any interpretation of the phrase *kingdom of heaven*, as used in the present instance, be more in unison with its proper sense of the state of reward or felicity,

proposed in another life, to the faith and obedience of moral agents, placed in a state of probation, on Christian principles, in this life. Those hopes, assurances, and promises, which are the peculiar privilege of the gospel profession, and constitute the practical excellence of the Christian principle at present, when they shall come to be realized in due time, will be that very state of reward or felicity, and therefore the very *kingdom of heaven* itself.

It may be said, indeed, that as the parable turns ostensibly on the exercise of comparison, judgment, and preference, in the choice of one thing and the rejection of another, such a supposition would apply to the direct comparison of the Christian, with any other religion; and would not be unsuitable to the case of those, more especially from among the Gentiles, who would have to choose between the faith of Christ, and any one of the various systems of that common idolatry, which before the promulgation and reception of the gospel, was universally prevalent in the Gentile world.

This application of the parable, specious as it may appear, fails in a very important article of the analogy. The comparison in the parable, it is true, lies between one pearl, and all other pearls distinct from that; but still merely between one pearl of superior value, and all others, as second only to that—as of inferior worth and estimation in comparison simply with that. It lies, therefore, not between one thing as absolutely good, and other things as absolutely bad; but between one thing as the best of a good kind, and all others though not the best of that kind, yet still belonging to it. All pearls must possess the common nature and common properties of pearls;

and the nature and properties of pearls can never be intrinsically bad, though there may be differences in the degrees of their intrinsic excellence, as it exists in some individuals of the species, and as it exists in others. There may be better pearls, then, and there may be worse, but there can be none absolutely bad: there can be only one the best of its kind, but there may be many good, and approaching more or less nearly to perfection in comparison of the best. The discrimination of the merchant therefore, was shewn in his distinguishing the best of the kind, out of many more or less good; and the wisdom of his choice, in preferring this one, as singly equivalent to all; in parting with the rest, or in being willing to give up the rest, for the sake of this one—if it was not otherwise to be obtained.

But in the comparison of the Christian religion with any other form of religious faith, as established in the Gentile world at the beginning of the gospel, the contrast would lie not between what was better of a good kind, and what was worse of the same; but between what was absolutely good in such and such respects, and what was absolutely bad in the same. It would not lie, therefore, between one goodly pearl as such, and others, though inferior in value to that, yet not destitute of an excellence of their own; but between one pearl the best of its kind, and others that were either no pearls at all, or if they had the appearance of pearls, had it only as counterfeits, only as base and spurious imitations of the genuine pearl, and of its excellence.

No Gentile or idolatrous religion could bear to be opposed to the Christian, as something partially

true to something more so: if contrasted with it at all, it must be as something entirely false with something entirely true. If the Christian religion was true at all, it was totally true; and if the Christian religion was totally true, all opposite religions, especially such religions as the various forms of Gentile superstition, were totally false. Between such dissimilar things as the religion of Jesus Christ, and any one of the multiform varieties of polytheism, at the commencement of the gospel, there could be no comparison like that of one pearl, the most superior in the properties of a common nature—with any other pearl, which however inferior to that one, yet possessed a real value and excellence of its own.

There is a passage in the first sermon on the mount, which may assist us to discover the legitimate meaning of the pearl in this parable: “Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before the swine^e.” If these words were spoken to the disciples in their future capacity of the preachers of the gospel, and if they contained any practical direction for the regulation of their conduct in the discharge of their gospel commission; by the pearls in question, as well as by the *holy thing* also spoken of, must be adumbrated the truths and revelations; the engagements and promises; the hopes and expectations; as much as the doctrines and precepts, of the gospel scheme—entrusted to the dispensation of its preachers, and not to be communicated to mankind, without due caution and discretion.

The metaphor of a pearl, then, may possess the signification of any desirable object of pursuit; of

^e Matt. vii. 6.

any thing which by an appearance of excellence, not only when real but even when imaginary, is capable of engaging the affections, and occupying the attention of moral agents, whether as concerns the present life, or as concerns the next. The foundation of such a metaphor is the most observable of analogies; such as there necessarily must be between one species of a certain genus and another—between one good or valuable and desirable possession, and another, as agreeing with it in the same respects.

What Christianity has to propose of this description, may be the one pearl of inestimable price; and what the world has to offer of the same kind, in contradistinction to what Christianity holds out, may be pearls of inferior value; but will still be pearls of one sort or another. Imaginary or apparent good itself, when proposed as an object of desire and pursuit under the persuasion of its excellence—is so far not to be discriminated from real. Its practical influence is just the same, as if it were real. Temporal good, that is to say the good, whose attainment and whose enjoyment are both confined to the limits of the present life, is so far distinct from and opposed to eternal, as that species of good, the desire of which and the fruition of which go beyond the present life, and find their fulfilment hereafter. Temporal good, then, is one sort of good, and eternal is another; between which, however, there is no necessary opposition or contradiction of nature, so as to make the one, under any circumstances, incompatible with the other; nor any essential difference, except as an inferior sort of the same thing differs, in point of worth and dignity, from a superior.

Temporal good, it is true, is oftentimes imaginary as much as real; and temporal good, even when real, and much more so when imaginary and unreal, may be so coveted and so pursued, as to be no longer compatible with the desire or pursuit of eternal; as not to be attained to and enjoyed itself, without endangering the attainment, or forfeiting the enjoyment of eternal. But in this case, it is not the nature of things, or the essential incompatibility of the two kinds of good, which is in fault; but an error of judgment, or a depravation of the will and predilections, on the part of the pursuer or possessor himself. It is possible to mistake in choosing between the better and the worse of two things, which resemble each other; it is possible even, deliberately to prefer the worse and to forego the better; and this is no more than, in deciding between their temporal and their eternal interests, men may be seen to do from a variety of causes, every day. It is possible too, to make such an use of one thing, when we have it in our power, considered even as a means or instrument to the attainment of something else, as by the very use of the means themselves to render it impossible that we should ever attain to the end. And this also is no more than men are daily seen to be doing, in the abuse of their present means and opportunities, considered as the appointed aids and instruments, which Providence has purposely put in their way, for the security and attainment of their future, everlasting good. But in none of these cases, is it possible that the fault and misconduct of men should alter the nature of things; or impart their own moral quality to the object of their mistaken choice, or the

subject of their misapplication and abuse. Temporal and present good will still be good; it will still be a pearl of some intrinsic value, though the error of human judgment, or the perversity of human predilections, may confound it with the one pearl of inestimable price, and deliberately prefer it to that; may advance it above future and eternal good, as the proper object of desire and pursuit; or so abuse it, while it is possessed, as necessarily to render it incompatible with the possession and enjoyment of future and eternal good; and so far, instead of a blessing to its owner, convert it into a curse.

It was not without reason, then, that the individual in the second parable, was described as a searcher after pearls, and pearls of the best kind, before he was represented as the possessor of one pearl of inestimable value, in consequence of the previous discovery of it. Man is so constituted by the law of his nature, that he can never rest satisfied except in the pursuit of his proper and peculiar good, (which he calls his happiness,) with a reasonable prospect of its attainment at last. After this good, as far as he is impelled towards it by instinct and beyond himself, he begins to aspire, even in his mother's womb, with the first motions of life itself; and as far as its pursuit is the result of his own consciousness of its want; of his own conviction of its excellence; and as far as its attainment is seen to depend upon himself—he begins to aspire with the first dawn of reason, and continues to aspire with premeditation and predilection, to the last moment of existence.

Nor is there any thing in which the world at

large so widely mistake the tendencies and suggestions of their own nature, and so fatally miscalculate their own interests, as in the methods which they adopt, and in the expedients which they contrive, for the gratification of this universal passion. Not considering what religion would teach them, if they did but attend to her and take her instructions for their guide, that the true happiness of such beings as mankind, is to be found in the perfection of their nature, hereafter, subsequent to that course of discipline and probation which it must first undergo here; in the ultimate enjoyment of God—the centre of all attraction, the climax of all perfection, the source and fountain head of all that is good and amiable, great and dignified—and in that abundant satisfaction of all their wants, to the utmost of their desire and to the full extent of their capacity, which reason alone would assure us, cannot fail to be the effect, where omnipotent power and unbounded goodness are both alike actively exerted in behalf of their creatures: they place their hopes of gratifying their impatient desire after happiness; they shew themselves alive to the impulse of this natural passion, only in the pursuit of a variety of objects, all dissimilar and discordant, when compared with each other; all sublunary, and confined to the sphere of time and sense; all mean and insignificant, when soberly estimated; all illusory and ineffectual, as the means of solid and substantial enjoyment; all perishable and transient—and most of them criminal and wicked ^f.

^f Maximus Tyrius Diss. xxxv. 3: "Ἐὰ μοι τοὺς βασιλεῖς καὶ τοὺς δυνάστας. τὰ δημοτικὰ οὐχ ὀρᾶς; ὅτι πᾶς ἀνὴρ πανταχόθεν ἐπὶ ταῦτὸ θεῖ; ὁ μὲν γῆς ἀπτόμενος, ὁ δὲ περὶ θάλατταν πραγματευόμενος, ὁ δὲ

It was not to be expected, that by becoming Christians, mankind should lose this natural tendency to the pursuit of their proper good; but it was to be expected, that by becoming Christians, they should find a better good proposed to their pursuit, than they could ever have selected for themselves; and a steadier direction given to their natural impulse after happiness, than they could have imparted to it of themselves. The learned Varro in one of his works, (which, however, has not come down to us,) reckoned up two hundred and eighty-eight different opinions on the nature of the sovereign good, or of what that was, the enjoyment of which would constitute the personal and proper happiness of man. Among these opinions, what common understanding was to decide where the truth lay; among so many pearls offered to choice, all claiming to be the best of their kind, what ordinary judgment and discrimination was to distinguish the one true pearl of great price; to fix upon that, and to reject the rest?

But these were pearls of human invention, and of human selection; while the pearl of the gospel is of heavenly origin, and comes down from the treasury of God. The wisest and most sagacious of old could not decide on the best of the pearls of the former kind; the simplest and rudest of mankind, at present, may feel instinctively and recognise intuitively the superiority and perfection of the latter. Such is the sufficiency of the Christian good; such is the excellence

περὶ πολέμους ἀσχολούμενος, ὁ δὲ περὶ λόγους σχολὴν ἄγων, ὁ δὲ γάμων λαμβάνων, ὁ δὲ παῖδας τρέφων, ὁ δὲ ληστεύων, ὁ δὲ ὑβρίζων, ὁ δὲ δωροδοκῶν, ὁ δὲ μοιχεύων, ὁ δὲ μισθοφορῶν.

Ibid. 6: Ἐνέφυσε γάρ τι ὁ θεὸς ζώπυρον τῷ τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένει τῆς προσδοκίας τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀπέκρυσσε δὲ αὐτοῦ τὴν εὕρεσιν.

of the gospel principle, that with an honest and sincere disposition, conscious of the want of some perfect good to its own happiness, but painfully at a loss in what to place it; ardently bent on its acquisition, and eagerly longing for its enjoyment—but utterly without a guide or instructor where to begin and where to end the search after it; what to do to obtain it, and how to find it; no other voucher for the truth of the religion itself is necessary, than the competency of the end which it proposes—the certainty of the means which it supplies—the steadiness and uniformity of the direction which it gives to our pursuit—and the entire accommodation to the utmost exigencies and capacities of our moral and sentient nature, which the proper good that it promises is instinctively felt to possess: the prospect of which is and must be as animating and encouraging to our hopes in this life, as its enjoyment will be adequate to our desires, sufficient for our wants, and commensurate to our faculties, in the next.

PARABLE EIGHTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE DRAWNET CAST INTO THE SEA.

MATTHEW XIII. 47, 48. HARMONY, P. III. 18.

MATTHEW xiii. 47, 48.

⁴⁷ “ Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a net, (a sagene,) “ which had been cast into the sea, and had got together *fish* “ from every sort : ⁴⁸ which, when it was filled, having drawn “ up to the shore, and laid down, *they* gathered together the “ good into vessels, but the bad they cast without.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

IT is peculiar to the subject-matter of this comparison, (which is the last of all that were delivered either in public or in private, on the present occasion,) that it is taken from a new class of objects, the employments of piscatory, not of rural or domestic, life. As, however, it was addressed to hearers, most of whom by their trade were fishermen, and all must have been more or less familiar with the habits and occupations of such a trade, it could not fail to appear to them as simple and intelligible, and as interesting, as any which they had previously heard.

I am not aware that any explanation is necessary to render the circumstances of the description intelligible to a modern reader, except in what regards the

nature of the net supposed to be employed on the draught or cast. The original name of this sort of net, is *σαγήνη*; a name, which as we have no word that would answer to it exactly in English, it would have been desirable to naturalize, and render by *sagene*.

From the descriptions of this variety of net, which may be met with in classical writers; and more particularly from the metaphorical use of the term, under very peculiar circumstances, instances of which may be produced from the same authorities, it is very clear that the *sagene* was not an ordinary fishing net; nor was the use of the *sagene* with a view to an ordinary cast or draught of fish. It was much too large for common occasions; nor was the intention of using it to take only a part of the fish, to be found in a particular quarter, but if possible, to take all; to let none escape; to sweep a stream or pool through the whole of its extent, and consequently of all its contents^a. The idea of a seine,

^a The *sagene* is enumerated by Oppian, among the other implements of the fisherman's craft.

Τῶν τὰ μὲν ἀμφίβληστρα, τὰ δὲ γρίφοι καλέονται
 γάγγαμά τ', ἡδ' ὑποχαὶ περιηγέες, ἡδὲ σαγήναι.
 ἄλλα δὲ κικλήσκουσι καλύμματα, σὺν δὲ σαγήναις
 πέζας, καὶ σφαιρῶνας ὁμοῦ, σκολιὸν τε πάναγρον'
 μυρία δ' αἰόλα τοῖα δολοῖράφρων λίνα κόλπων.

Halieut. iii. 80.

Æschylus appears to describe it, Agamemnon, 1353.

"Ἀπειρον ἀμφίβληστρον, ὥσπερ ἰχθύων,
 περιστιχίζω, πλοῦτον εἴματος κακόν.

Perhaps also, Habakkuk i. 15: "They take up all of them with
 "the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in
 "their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad."

Sic

or drownet, would come nearest to the notion of such a net; if it were capable of reaching from one extremity of a given tract of water to another, in length, and from the top to the bottom of the water, in depth; and so, being dragged leisurely along from one end of the stream to the other, of enclosing every thing that was to be found in the water.

The kind of net which is supposed to be thus used for the sake of the draught, naturally accounts for the comprehensiveness of the draught effected by it. It could not fail to enclose of every sort of fish; of every species and variety at least, which were to be met with in the particular tract of water through which it was drawn. The consequence of such a draught would be that fish of all qualities, as well as of all kinds, would be enclosed by it; some better

Sic ligat immensa virides indagine saltus
 Venator: sic attonitos ad littora pisces
 Æquoreus populator agit, rarosque plagarum
 Contrahit anfractus, et hiantes colligit oras.

Claudian. in Rufinum, ii. 376.

Metaphorically, Herodotus describes it, as follows, vi. 31: "Ὅκως δὲ λάβοι τιὰ τῶν νήσων, ὡς ἐκάστην αἰρέοντες οἱ βάρβαροι ἐσαγγήμενον τοὺς ἀνθρώπους· σαγηνέουσι δὲ τόνδε τὸν τρόπον. ἀνὴρ ἀνδρὸς ἀψάμενος τῆς χειρὸς, ἐκ θαλάσσης τῆς βορηῆς ἐπὶ τὴν νοτίην διήκουσι, καὶ ἔπειτα διὰ πάσης τῆς νήσου διέρχονται ἐκθηρεύοντες τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

So likewise Philo Judæus, ii. 95. 23. De Mose: καθάπερ βόλον ἰχθύων πάντας ἐν κύκλῳ σαγηνεύσας. Ibid. 731.

De Mose iii: 'Ὁ δὲ προφήτης ὄρων ὑπ' ἐκπλήξεως σεσαγηνευμένον, ὥσπερ βόλον ἰχθύων, τὸ σύμπαν ἔθνος, κ', τ. λ.

But he seems to describe the literal sagene, in the following passage, i. 303. 44. De Agricultura: Καθάπερ γὰρ οἱ ἀλιενόμενοι δίκτυα καθιάσιν ἔστιν ὅτε μέγιστα, πολλὴν ἐν κύκλῳ περιβαλλόμενοι θάλατταν, ἴν' ὡς πλείστους ἐντὸς ληφθέντας ἀρκύων, οἷα τειχήρεις γεγονότας, ἰχθύς συλλαβῶσι· τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἢ πλείστη μοῖρα ἀνθρώπων, κ', τ. λ.

and others worse, some fit for food or store, and others not. The consequence of this distinction also would be, that in order to make a proper use of the different contents of the net, respectively, it would be necessary to sift and separate them asunder, and to dispose of the better sort in one way, and of the worse in another : which is accordingly, the last thing implied to be done.

In this separation of the contents of the sagene from each other, and in this different, but at the same time, natural and appropriate disposal of the better and the worse part of them, respectively, the end proposed by a capture of fishes under all circumstances, and whether with one kind of net or with another, must be comprehended.

THE MORAL.

Though there is no parable or comparison besides this, which admits of being confronted with it as derived from the same class of objects in real life ; and consequently, though there is no instance in which the image or metaphor of a sagene, or of any other species of net, is found to be employed elsewhere, which might assist us in determining its meaning on the present occasion ; there are two matters of fact in the gospel history, one prior, the other posterior, to the time of this parable, which, if we make due allowance for the difference between a real transaction, and a fictitious one that nevertheless resembles the real, would admit of being compared with the subject-matter of the parable, and very probably be found to illustrate its scope and meaning.

Were the description in the parable the account

of a real transaction—of a capture or draught of fishes, actually made under the circumstances there supposed; every one will allow that it would be the counterpart of the two miraculous draughts of fishes, made at two different times on the lake of Galilee; one of them, in the course of the first year of our Saviour's ministry, before the ordination of the apostles, and the other, in the interval between the resurrection and the ascension, before they entered upon their evangelical commission ^b.

The point of view in which each of these miraculous captures is to be regarded, is doubtless that of a symbol or type of the success which the same persons should have as apostles, in evangelizing the world, who had just had such success as fishermen, in making so prodigious a draught ^c. The whole transaction, then, upon each of those occasions, would require to be looked upon and understood as allegorical and prophetic, notwithstanding it was a matter of fact; and so far it would be well qualified to illustrate a very similar matter of fact, which though fictitious in itself was allegorical and prophetic also.

The analogy between the circumstances of the material description in the parable, and those of the real miraculous capture on the second of the occasions referred to, appears the more strikingly in this respect; that the draught in the one is said to have enclosed of every kind and variety of fish, and the numbers of the capture in the other are stated at one hundred and fifty-three. It is very reasonable

^b Luke v. 1—11. Harmony, P. ii. 24. John xxi. 1—14. Harmony, P. v. 13.

^c See my Dissertations, (vol. ii. Diss. ix.)

to presume that there is a meaning in this number ; or that it would not have been so particularly mentioned. Now it is observable that one hundred and fifty-three, though not the amount of all the varieties of fish known to modern naturalists, is yet the precise amount of all that the ancients have reckoned up as known to them^d. Let each of this number, then, be supposed to stand for a class or variety ; and the actual draught in the real instance of the capture, will answer to the supposed one in the parable, as having taken *some of every sort*.

On the ground of such analogies as these, we might have concluded *a priori*, that the moral of the description in the parable, on the whole, must be something akin to the symbolical and prophetic import of the two miraculous draughts. That

^d Hieronym. iii. 1058. *ad calc.* in Ezek. xlvi: Aiunt autem qui de animantium scripsere naturis et proprietate, qui ἀλιεντικὰ tam Latino, quam Græco didicere sermone, de quibus Oppianus Cilix est poeta doctissimus, centum quinquaginta tria esse genera piscium : quæ omnia capta sunt ab apostolis, et nihil remansit incaptum.

Rittershusius actually makes out this number from the accounts of Oppian. See page 372—376 of his edition. Pliny H. N. xxxii. 53 : reckons the species of *aquatilia* of all sorts to be one hundred and seventy-four. But of these, he makes thirty species of crustacea, (ix. 16.) which leaves one hundred and forty-four of *pisces*, as such. As his numbers in neither instance are free from corruption, it is not improbable that if we had the exact statement of the amount of the different kinds of fish, with which he was acquainted, it would be found to agree with that of Oppian and Jerome.

I will just observe that the lake of Galilee, as we learn from Josephus, abounded in fish. Harmer has shewn from Hasselquist, Egmont, and Heyman, that some are taken there, which weigh thirty pounds apiece. Vol. iv. 200, 201. ch. viii. obs. iv.

the one was fictitious, and that the other two were matters of fact, would make no difference to their subserviency to some further end and meaning in common. If a real matter of fact, on two several occasions, could be the vehicle of prophecy, and the appropriate symbol of something to come, much more might a supposed one; the nature and circumstances of which, the framer and inventor of the parable himself would necessarily accommodate to the end in view, and render such in themselves as fitly to prefigure and symbolize something else.

Our Saviour himself, however, has supplied an interpretation of this parable, as he did of that of the sower and of the tares; by the help of which it is easy to discover what it was always intended to denote. But before we proceed any further, it is necessary to point out a certain peculiarity in the phraseology of the original, which is not accurately observed in the received translation; and yet is of importance to the just determination of the moral of the account.

The Greek, word for word, stands as follows: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like to a sagene, “ which had been cast into the sea, and had got together from every sort: which, when it was filled, “ having drawn up to the shore, and laid down, *they* “ gathered together the good into vessels, but the “ bad *they* cast without^e.”

^e Compare with the description in the parable, the following from Oppian, of a draught of ἀφύαι, or anchovies.

Τὰς δ' ὀπότε φράσσονται ἐπὶ σφισὶ πεπτηνίας
 ἰχθυβόλοι, κοίλῃσι περιπτύσσουσι σαγήναις
 ἀσπασίως· πολλὴν δὲ ποτὶ ῥηγμῖνας ἄγουσιν
 ἄγρην, νόσφι πόνουιο, καὶ ἄγγεα πάντ' ἀφύησιν

The whole of this description is historical; and therefore the whole is an account of something supposed to be past: yet, notwithstanding, certain things in it are spoken of as prior even to others; one part of the process is considered to be over, even before the other begins. The casting of the net into the sea; its enclosing of every sort; its continuing in the sea, until it was full; its being previously brought to shore, and laid down there; are parts of the business, supposed to be over before the sorting of the contents of the net, or any thing that follows upon that, is assumed even to begin.

It must be admitted, however, that every circumstance of the process, which precedes this sorting, is preliminary to it. And it must be admitted in like manner that the sorting also is preliminary to its proper effect, the separation of the contents of the net into the good and the bad respectively: and that separation itself is but the necessary, previous step to the effect which next ensues, the gathering of the good into vessels, and the casting of the bad away. And in this separate disposal of the good and the bad, at last, the final end of the whole process, the effect designed by every thing that precedes, up to it, must plainly be considered to reside.

ἡδ' ἀκάτους ἔπλησαν· ἐπ' ἡϊύσιν δὲ βαθείαις
 θημῶνας νήησαν, ἀπειρεσίης χύσιν ἄγρης.
 οἶον δ' ἐργατίαι Δηοῦς πόνον ἐκτελέσαντες
 πνοιῆς, χερσαίοις τε διακρίναντες ἐρετμοῖς,
 καρπὸν εὐτροχάλοιο μέσον κατὰ χῶρον ἀλωῆς
 πολλὸν ἐνήσαντο· περιπλήθουσα δὲ πάντη
 πυροδόκος στεφάνη λευκαίνεται ἔνδον ἀλωῆς·
 ὡς τότε ἀπειρεσίησι περιπληθῆς ἀφύησιν
 ὄφρυν ἀγχιάλου λευκαίνεται αἰγιαλοῖο.

Let us now turn to the particulars of our Lord's interpretation. "So shall it be," said he, "at the close of the period of ages. The angels shall go forth, and shall separate the evil from the midst of the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing, and the gnashing of the teeth."

Two things are observable in this explanation. First, the object assigned to the going forth of the angels, is the separation of the evil as such from the good, and not of the good as such from the evil. Secondly, the effect of the separation at last is in unison with such an object at first; viz. a certain disposal of the evil, without any mention of the disposal of the good. If then, the going forth of the angels for any such purpose in general, as is here assigned, is the beginning of an œconomy of retribution; if the separation of one description of moral agents from another, is the process by which it is carried into effect; if the respective disposal of either at last, is the final immutable personal result to which such a process must conduct, in behalf of each of its proper subjects: the interpretation by restricting the effects of this process to the bad in contradistinction to the good, leads to the inference that the moral or scope of the parable is to represent the process and result of the œconomy of retribution, such as may be expected at the close of the œconomy of probation, with a special reference to the ultimate treatment and disposal of the bad, and not of the good, among the proper subjects whether of the probation beforehand or of the retribution at last.

This distinction is not without its use, in discriminating the proper moral of the present parable

from that of the parable of the tares. It would differ from the latter, it is true, as confining itself to the results of the œconomy of retribution strictly so called, without taking into account the previous œconomy of probation; that is, by restricting itself to the end and conclusion of a certain scheme, of which the parable of the tares comprehended also the beginning and the intermediate duration. But it must differ from it still more, in confining the results even of this œconomy to one of the classes or divisions of its subjects: which the parable of the tares, on the contrary, extended to both.

On this construction, the moral of the parable is the single consideration of the personal disposal of the bad, at the proper time, in a certain state and condition of existence by themselves; however confounded and mixed up indiscriminately with the good, at present. The tenor and connexion of the material circumstances confirm this construction; at least, if the end originally proposed by the draught, must have been the enclosure, if possible, of good fish alone; if from the nature of the draught itself, bad would be enclosed by it as well as good; if the consequence of this mixture, with a view to the attainment of the original end, would be the sorting of the bad as such, out of the good, and not *vice versa*, of the good out of the bad, before either could be properly disposed of, as the difference of their own nature and qualities required; the good, to be collected into vessels of store; the bad, to be cast away as refuse and vile. All this is capable of a special application to the present personal admixture of bad Christians with good, among the members of the visible church—as inconsistent with the end always

designed by the institution of such a church; and therefore, as requiring a special interposition, sometime or other, on the part of the proper authority, to separate the former personally, from the latter, before even these can be disposed of, in conformity to the end and design originally proposed by placing them in a state of probation within the visible Christian church.

The signification of the phrase, *kingdom of heaven*, then, which is premised as the object of comparison in this parable also, is the same as in former instances; though for the reasons just mentioned, the particular purpose which it proposes to illustrate, is the close and consummation, rather than the beginning or continuance of the gospel dispensation. But even the close and consummation of a thing presuppose its beginning, and its continuance until then: so that one part of the description in the parable may be as analogous to the first state of the existing visible church, as the other is to the last. The circumstances of resemblance between the material description and both these states, may be briefly pointed out, as follows.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The sagene was let down into the sea, as the gospel dispensation was begun, and the visible church was planted, in the midst of the world. The sagene was let down for the sake of enclosing a draught; and the gospel dispensation was begun for the sake of converting mankind. The sagene could not fail to enclose of every kind of fish; and the gospel dispensation, being designed for all mankind, could not

fail to make converts and to establish the visible church, among all the nations of the earth.

The final end of letting down the sagene was to enclose, if possible, only the good; that is, only those of every kind, which should be fit for food or store: but as a necessary consequence of the letting down of such a net, the draught even of the good could not be made without including some of the bad. The final end of the gospel dispensation, or what is the same thing, the establishment of the visible church in a state of probation here, preparatory to a state of retribution hereafter, being the formation of the invisible out of the congregation of the visible church; none could be proper to be members of the one, who would not be fit to be members of the other; that is, no such professors of Christianity in general, in the present life, as the ultimate design and constitution of the Christian church required, could be the merely nominal; but only the sincere and genuine.

It is indispensable, however, to the conditions of a state of probation as such, that those who are subjected to it, should be left to their own motives and principles of conduct; that none should be compelled by any violence, whether moral or physical, so long as they are subject to their proper trial or discipline, to be either better or worse than they would otherwise be of themselves. It was a necessary consequence of the gospel scheme, that the acceptance and profession of Christianity would be as indiscriminate as its offer and promulgation; which were made, without reserve, to all. The name of Christian, therefore, in numberless instances could not fail to be assumed by those, whose lives and

conduct would not accord to the principles of their profession, as well as by those in whose instance they would. Where the gospel has obtained possession of any country, so that the Christian religion is the only one established, and the only one acknowledged or professed to be acknowledged, by its inhabitants, as true : mere immorality, so far as it is permitted themselves and practised by any of its nominal professors, becomes a departure from the principles of their profession ; and is just as inconsistent with the force of the obligations of the very religion which they pretend to receive and acknowledge, as avowed infidelity itself would be.

The sagene, when it had once been let down into the sea, remained there until it was full ; and the gospel dispensation, as it has begun to work, must continue to work, until the end proposed by it shall be accomplished, and the œconomy of probation, which is coexistent with its duration, shall be arrived at that point, where the œconomy of retribution must begin. Before this can be, the limits of the visible church must receive either their utmost possible, or their utmost designed extent, and its congregation must include all mankind, if Christianity is destined to be established over all the earth ; or if not, as great a proportion of mankind, as the providence of God may intend, upon the whole, to partake in the benefits of the gospel scheme.

The bringing of the sagene to shore, when full, and the laying it down there, were circumstances interposed between its being filled, and the beginning to sift and sort its contents ; and they will find their counterpart in the proceedings at the close of the œconomy of probation, preparatory to the

proper commencement of the œconomy of retribution, when all who have been subjected to the former, will first be collected together, preparatory to the latter.

There must have been proper instruments in letting down the sagene into the sea, as well as in bringing it up to the land—who might be the same, or might be different. In like manner, the agency of the apostles and of the other emissaries of the gospel, carried the gospel dispensation into effect at first; and the instrumentality of the angels, as we are told, will be employed to bring it to a close.

The gathering of the good fish of every kind into proper vessels of store, but the rejection of the bad in every case, as worthless and refuse, without—were the results of the sorting, in reference to the fish; and the reception of the good and righteous of every name and nation within the pale of the Christian church, into their proper state of reward, exaltation, and felicity, but the exclusion of the bad opposed to them, who are included in the same complex of professing believers, into their proper place of punishment, with the sensible penal consequences of that exclusion, wailing and the gnashing of teeth—will be the results of the process of retribution to all the members, whether real or nominal, better or worse, of the existing visible church.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

ON

THE EIGHT PARABLES FIRST DELIVERED.

THE account, which has been given of each of the above parables in its turn, has been confined to the illustration of its particular scope and meaning: but before we take our leave of their consideration entirely, there are still some remarks which may properly be made upon them in common; and which will have the effect of shewing that though each of them has a peculiar and an independent moral of its own, yet as they were all delivered consecutively on one and the same occasion, so there is more or less of connexion, resemblance, and continuity between them.

The moral of the parable of the sower was the different success of the first offer of the gospel, according to the different tempers and inclinations every where, of those who should be addressed by it. The moral of the parable of the tares was the actual state and constitution of the existing visible church, in the personal distinctions and oppositions of character which exist among the same complex of professing Christians; compared with its original design and purpose, as intended to embrace, and as at first embracing, no mixture or variety of character but the good, and worthy of the name of Christian.

The former parable was, therefore, so far preparatory to the latter, as the first promulgation of Christianity, and its reception by one sort of converts or another, were preliminary to the foundation of a church, or the formation of converts into societies. The history begun in the one, is carried forward in the other, by asserting the fact, and assigning the final end of the fact, that Christian societies do not consist, as they were at first designed to consist, and as the result even in the parable of the sower, seemed to promise that they should—of the good and sincere alone ; of the converts possessed of the honest and good heart in the former instance. The subject, therefore, of these two parables respectively, is connected together, in such a manner as the first beginning, and the actual resulting state, of one and the same œconomy, in the nature of things must be connected. The proper subject of the latter, when compared with that of the former, is consequently the more complex and more enlarged, and so far the more difficult and mysterious of the two. It is more complex and extensive, because it takes up the topic first begun in the preceding, and continues it only to expand and particularize it still more. It is more difficult and mysterious, as dwelling no longer on the simple, elementary idea of merely preaching the gospel, but as sketching beforehand the outline of the form and constitution of the future Christian church, which should be the result of that preaching, from its beginning to the end of time : a topic never hitherto touched upon, and in the present state of the hopes, the expectations, the opinions and prejudices of all our Lord's hearers, whether the people or his own followers, perhaps,

wholly inconceivable, and unintelligible to any of them.

The moral of the three parables, respectively, which followed next, was first, The intrinsic vitality of the Christian religion, and the tutelary providence of God, which after the first rise of the religion into being, would cooperate together to preserve it in being, until the end of its being should be accomplished: secondly, The prodigious, sensible disparity between the grandeur, extent, and dominion of the visible church at last, compared with the smallness, the meanness, the narrowness of its limits and jurisdiction at first: thirdly, The diffusive, regenerating, and transforming energy of the Christian doctrines in the complex, as exerted on the wide-spread, inveterate corruptions both of religion and of morality, throughout the Gentile world.

There is manifestly, therefore, a connexion of scope and meaning, an association of thought and idea, in these three parables, compared with each other and also with the two which precede. The subject of those two was the gospel dispensation in the complex: that of the three next, is some select and distinguishing attribute, quality, or circumstance of it: of the first, the establishment of the Christian religion, at first—its continuance and preservation, ever after: of the second, the magnitude of its growth and increase: of the third, its moral and religious effects. These circumstances are, perhaps, more closely connected with the moral of the two preceding parables, in the first and second instance, than in the third; and hence perhaps, the similarity of the material image in them all, the sowing and planting of seed in general, or the sowing

and planting of the mustard seed in particular. But they are all so associated with each other, that the idea of one might naturally suggest the idea of another. The establishment of the Christian religion, as a consequence of the preliminary promulgation of the gospel, might suggest both its intrinsic vitality and the tutelary providence which should ever after preserve it in being; the first formation of a visible church, as a distinct, independent society somewhere existing in the world, would spontaneously lead to the contrast of its beginnings with the ultimate magnitude of its growth, and the immensity of its limits; the very being, diffusion, and reception of the Christian religion, could not fail to suggest, in like manner, the natural moral effects, inseparable from its influence and commensurate with its extent^a.

^a In addition to what has thus been said, shewing the connexion between the several parables delivered in public, which the evangelists, taken together, have left on record—we may observe, that it is perhaps, a very probable explanation of the omission of *those many other parables of like kind*, delivered at the same time, and on the same occasion, in the audience of the people, though not left on record—that however numerous they might be, and however different apparently one from another, and from those which are recorded—the scope and drift, the moral and meaning of all, whether those on record or those omitted, were the same. In other words, the moral of every other parable, delivered on this occasion but not recorded, was substantially the same as that of some one or other of the five, which were pronounced at the same time, and have been related. These five are specimens of all that were delivered at the same time and on the same occasion, and in these five taken together, we have the epitome or multum in parvo, of the entire day's teaching in parables: every other parable, delivered at the same time, but not similarly recorded as delivered, did but illustrate in a different way, the same truths or matters of fact, as some one or other of the five which we have on record.

All these parables, then, relating as they did to the history, circumstances, characteristics and effects of the future gospel dispensation, were clearly such as not to be understood at the time: and therefore, consistently with the design proposed by teaching in parables of the allegorical kind, which was concealment—might very properly be addressed to the multitude at large, as the vehicles of prophecy not yet ripe for disclosure. It is manifest, too, that whether capable of being understood or not, they would not concern the hearers in their individual capacity; that there was nothing in them which bore a special or personal reference to any in particular, except so far as might relate to the apostles, or to the other emissaries of Christianity, in their appropriate, but as yet future, character of the instruments in the propagation of the gospel.

Of the three, however, which were afterwards delivered in private, the moral of the first was the great goodness of God in proposing so invaluable a treasure as the gospel profession, to the option and acceptance of any: that of the second was the inestimable value of the blessings and promises; the hopes and prospects of the gospel—as the one pearl of superior price, compared with any other kind of good, and as singly equivalent to all besides: that of the third was the individual personal disposal of the bad, or the merely professing Christian, at the end of the world, into a state and condition of being peculiar to themselves, and constituting their proper punishment, in opposition to the state of reward and felicity, which at the same time awaits the good.

The first of these parables was, consequently, very closely connected with the second: insomuch as be-

tween the first offer and acceptance of the gospel, and the sense of the value of its particular blessings, prerogatives, and assurances, with which the acceptance and profession of the gospel first make us practically acquainted, there is a direct association in the nature of things: and it is evident that each of them is much more applicable to the case of individuals, than to that of communities, as such. Nor is the moral of the third parable less of a personal nature, nor destitute of connexion with the other two; at least, so far as the motive which leads to the acceptance and profession of Christianity in particular instances, is of a nature to concern individuals, and tends to consequences in the life and character, which are consistent with the genuine practical sense of its excellence, and paramount importance to every thing else—or not.

Each of these parables, accordingly, suggests a practical inference from the material fact itself; and that, of a personal or individual tendency. The first, the obligation incumbent on every one, within whose power the option of the gospel overture is placed, to accept it with joy and gratitude: the second, the obligation incumbent on all its professors, to esteem its blessings and privileges, present or to come, in proportion to their intrinsic worth and excellence; to prefer them to every other object of desire or pursuit, which might dispute with them the first place in their affections; and to sacrifice every thing else, if need be, for the single consideration of securing or retaining the possession of them: the third, the obligation incumbent on all, of inquiring into the purity of the motive or principle, which determines their choice, individually, of the

Christian profession, and whether it is such as to lead to a life conformable thereto, or not. This particular conclusion, it is true, is enforced by the argument *ad terrorem*; that is, by setting forth the penal retribution which more especially awaits the bad, or the merely nominal Christian, at the proper day of inquiry into the conduct of all, or who have, and who have not lived up to the obligations of their Christian profession. But the argument addressed to our fears is at all times more powerful than the argument addressed to our hopes; and in the present corrupt and degenerate state of our moral nature, in proportion to its greater power is its greater expediency or necessity.

The nature of these three parables, then, was such, that they could not, perhaps, be addressed at the time with so much propriety to the people at large, as to the apostles in particular: that is, to those who were already believers in Christ, and in due time would become Christians by profession. And they may still be addressed, with almost the same propriety, to the nominal professors of Christianity at all times—while its profession or nonprofession, or while conformity or nonconformity to its particular duties and obligations, is still matter of personal concern to every individual moral agent, as much as at its first publication.

All these parables, therefore, as we may observe in the last place, have turned out, upon examination, to be not only allegories but prophecies; and prophecies of the most illustrious description. Referred to the time when the parables were spoken, these prophecies were still strictly and purely so: and referred even to our own time, they have not altogether ceased to be what they were at first. The sub-

ject matter of the prediction, in each instance, is such, that though the prophecy must have begun to be accomplished as soon as the gospel dispensation itself began to have a being; it still continues to be accomplished because the gospel dispensation still continues in being: and it can never be completely fulfilled, until the design and purpose of Christianity itself are accomplished in the consummation of all things.

It is evident, also, that in the several prophecies of the future with respect to the approaching gospel dispensation, of which these parables were made the vehicles, and all which were speedily fulfilled, or speedily began to be fulfilled, by the event—are included some of the most convincing arguments for the truth of the Christian religion, as derived not merely from the prophecy of such and such a future matter of fact, delivered before it came to pass—but from the nature of the fact itself. It is evident too, that they are calculated to supply an answer beforehand to some of the most plausible objections to the truth of the same religion, by accounting for certain extraordinary matters of fact, which at first sight would appear inconsistent with it: and by clearly satisfying us, that nothing has since happened, possessing the semblance of contrariety and anomaly, which was not foreseen long before the event, and is not for wise and sufficient reasons permitted merely to continue at present as it is. Both these arguments and these objections were adverted to, if not as fully and completely as perhaps they might deserve, yet sufficiently to draw the attention of the reader to them; which makes it unnecessary to repeat our observations upon them.

PARABLE NINTH. MORAL.

THE KING TAKING ACCOUNT OF HIS DEBTORS.

MATTHEW XVIII. 1—22.

HARMONY, P. IV. 15.

MATTHEW xviii. 1—22.

¹ In that hour came the disciples to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² And Jesus having called a little child unto him, set it in the midst of them, ³ and said, “Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as the little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself like to this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. ⁶ And whoso would offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it is good for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the expanse of the sea.

⁷ “Woe unto the world, because of offences! for it must needs be that offences should come: nevertheless, woe unto that man through whom the offence cometh. ⁸ And if thy hand or thy foot is offending thee, cut them off, and cast *them* from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, *rather* than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the fire everlasting. ⁹ And if thine eye is offending thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: it is good for thee to enter into life a one-eyed *person*, *rather* than having two eyes to be cast into the gehenna of fire.

¹⁰ “Take heed lest ye despise one of these little ones: for I say unto you, Their angels in heaven are always beholding the

“ face of my Father, which is in heaven. ¹¹ For the Son of
 “ man is come to save that which was lost. ¹² What think ye?
 “ if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone
 “ astray, doth he not, having left the ninety-nine, go to the
 “ mountains, and seek that which is going astray? ¹³ And if it
 “ so come to pass that he hath found it, verily I say unto you,
 “ he rejoiceth for it more than for the ninety-nine which have
 “ not gone astray. ¹⁴ Even thus is there not before your Fa-
 “ ther, which is in heaven, a will that one of these little ones
 “ should perish.

¹⁵ “ And if thy brother should offend against thee, go and
 “ convince him of *his fault* between thee and himself alone: if
 “ he attend to thee, thou hast gained thy brother. ¹⁶ But if he
 “ attend to thee not, take with thee one or two besides, that by
 “ the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be esta-
 “ blished. ¹⁷ And if he refuse to attend to them, tell *it* to the
 “ church; and if he refuse to attend even to the church, let
 “ him be unto thee as the Gentile and the Publican. ¹⁸ Verily I
 “ say unto you, Whatsoever things ye may bind on the earth,
 “ they shall be bound in the heaven; and whatsoever things
 “ ye may loose on the earth, they shall be loosed in the heaven.
 “ ¹⁹ Again I say unto you, If two of you should agree on
 “ the earth, concerning any thing that they may ask, it shall
 “ come to pass unto them from my Father, which is in heaven.
 “ ²⁰ For where there are two or three, being gathered together
 “ in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

²¹ Then came Peter to him, and said, “ Lord, how often
 “ shall my brother offend against me, and I shall forgive him?
 “ until seven times?” ²² Jesus saith unto him, “ I say not unto
 “ thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven.”

PRELIMINARY MATTER.

THE parable, which we are about to consider, is the first of its proper class that has come under our notice. It is not necessary to repeat what was said in the General Introduction, upon the subject of the moral parables; the criterion, by which they are distinguished from the allegorical; their

specific character as examples; the practical application which is made of them, at the time of their delivery; the probability that they consist of real, not fictitious circumstances, and the like. The conclusions established on these points with respect to this class of parables in general, I hope still further to illustrate, by shewing their application in the present instance, to the first of which they were intended.

As, however, the present parable is found in the midst of a longer discourse, which takes up the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, we shall not be prepared to enter upon its discussion, without having first considered the particulars which precede it. It may be very true, that our Saviour's discourses, on no occasion, were systematic compositions; and therefore, that we ought not to expect any formal method in their arrangement; nor consequently, that community of subjects, that distribution of parts, and that association of ideas in passing from one topic to another, which we should naturally look for in regular and methodical productions. Still, if it is reasonable to presume that in a discourse, delivered at one time, whatever be its general character, and whatever the particular variety of its topics, a natural, unstudied connexion should be seen to prevail, and something like a gradation of thought spontaneously pervade the whole; it is manifest, that the consideration of any of its parts, especially the latter ones, will require the consideration of the rest. This must be my apology to the reader, both on the present occasion and upon any similar one hereafter, for promising to the exposition of such parables as occur in the midst of continuous discourses, an explanation of the matter

which preceded, and under the circumstances of the case, probably suggested or led to them.

We cannot, however, enter upon this explanation, without taking into account the circumstances of time and place under which the discourse itself was delivered; and the probable origin of that question, put by our Lord's disciples to their Master, with which it is seen to have been introduced. For this purpose, I refer the reader to the fourteenth Dissertation in the second volume of my former work, p. 414—the object of which is to verify the arrangement of the fourteenth and fifteenth sections in the fourth part of my *Harmony of the Gospels*, by shewing that the substance of Mark ix. 33—50: and of Luke ix. 46—50: however apparently it may resemble Matt. xviii. 1—9, (the first part of the present Discourse,) is really distinct from it, so far as that though both occurred on the same day, and probably in the same house in Capernaum; the former was over, before the latter was begun. In the same Dissertation some reasons are assigned to account for the origin of those disputes concerning precedence, which began to appear at this period of the gospel history, the first half of our Lord's third year; and likewise in explanation of the fact that the apostles were silent, when questioned by Jesus on the subject of their late dispute, yet came to their Master themselves, in the course of the same day, referring the dispute to him. The discourse which he pronounced in answer to that reference, was compared with St. Mark's account of what he had said just before, in order to shew that there is neither as much agreement between them, as we should expect in two accounts of the same discourse;

nor yet more of disagreement than can naturally be explained, by supposing the same speaker to be repeating, on the later occasion, the substance of the same sentiments in reference to the same topic, on which he had been discoursing just before.

This being the case, our attention will be confined at present to the consideration of Matt. xviii. though, so far as this chapter admits of comparison with Mark ix. 33—50. or Luke ix. 46—50. the proximity of the occasions when both the discourses took place, on the one hand, and the kindred nature of the topics on which they insist, or the language in which they are expressed, on the other, may justify us in availing ourselves of any light that may be reflected on St. Matthew, by the parallel parts of St. Mark or St. Luke.

It appears, then, that when the apostles proposed their question to Jesus, “Who then is greatest” (*or greater than the rest*) “in the kingdom of heaven?” he did not immediately reply; but called to him a little child, which he placed in the midst of them, before he said any thing himself. He had done the same thing before, as appears both from St. Mark and from St. Luke; and as the occasion on which he did it then, was the same in general as that on which he was doing it now, the reason *why* he did it in each instance, we may presume was the same also. On the former occasion, the apostles had recently been disputing among themselves, which was, or which should be, the greatest; and on this, they had just come to their Master to ask, Who then was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? The production of the child, therefore, was intended to put an end to *that* dispute, and to return an answer to *this* question: so that in both cases, the

child stood for the same thing, or for two things not to be distinguished asunder; the greatest among the disciples of Christ—and the greatest in the kingdom of heaven: in both cases consequently, the character of the child was a typical character, and its production in that capacity, was a significant action, designed to convey, by a sensible image, a moral or spiritual truth. As to the presence even of the same child, on two occasions so near to each other in point of time—it is a supposition which need not create any difficulty ^a.

The employment of sensible images, symbolically, with a moral intent, is a method of conveying instruction which, from the nature of the case, is equally adapted to opposite purposes; both to obscure and to clear up the meaning of the teacher; both to make things easier of comprehension, and to hide and perplex the understanding of them. It is one accordingly, to which, in the earlier ages of the world, the dispensers of moral, religious, or physical truth frequently had recourse, while knowledge of any kind was still neither promiscuously to be imparted, nor promiscuously to be received; while concealment from *some* was just as much an object, as explanation to *others*; while mystery and difficulty were just as necessary for the first or exterior perception of truth, as clearness and facility of comprehension, on a nearer inspection, and a closer comparison of things together.

A symbolical action, which is one thing in ap-

^a We meet with a tradition in ecclesiastical history, that Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was the child, either on this or on some other occasion, taken up by our Lord and set before the apostles, *typi gratia*, or blessed by him.

pearance and another in reality, is so far allegorical or enigmatical; and therefore exhibits the usual obscurity which is the natural accompaniment of the enigma or allegory, until it is interpreted and made intelligible. Such representations bear the same relation to actions as metaphors to words. The translation of an old and familiar name, to express a new idea, is always liable to more or less of difficulty in comprehending the use of the same term in a different sense; and a symbolical representation, consisting of circumstances which in their ordinary occurrence, would have had an ordinary meaning, but are now invested with a peculiar character and relation, different from the ordinary, necessarily entails a degree of confusion in distinguishing between the primary sense, and the secondary construction, of those circumstances.

Conversation by signs or actions, is the expedient which the sense of present need naturally suggests to supply the defect of language, or of any other means of communication, that might be substituted in its stead. There never was a time indeed, when men did not possess the faculty of speech; and therefore, there never was a time when they could have been left altogether to carry on the exchange of ideas, by the intervention of any medium except its natural one, the use of words. But language may have its infancy, as well as its maturity; and whatever degree of power, variety, and perfection it has attained to at last, it may have known a state of poverty at first, in which its means were circumscribed, its resources and riches were still unexplored, and its powers of expression were limited and curtailed.

In the period of its transition from a less perfect to a more perfect state, the feeling of the inadequacy of language to express their various ideas intelligibly, would compel men, for the purpose of assisting each other's comprehensions, to have more frequent recourse to sensible images; the case being much the same, whether the parties who converse together, do not understand each other at all, that is, make use of a different language—or understand each other imperfectly, that is, make use of a language in common, which as yet is but ill adapted for the commerce of ideas. In this case, there is no alternative left except to converse by signs; to facilitate the comprehension of imperfect utterance, or to supply the existing defect of words, by a frequent appeal to things.

In a barbarous state of society, before the improvement of the arts and manufactures is sufficiently advanced to keep pace with the wants of life, the same instrument, however ill suited to more uses than one, is obliged to serve a variety of purposes; and in the infancy of language, before the power of expression has expanded with the growth of ideas, and the stock of words with the accumulation of knowledge, the same word is obliged to stand in a variety of senses, and to convey a variety of ideas; more perhaps, than it is properly adapted to express. The language of barbarians is commonly the most figurative and poetical; the poorest and least cultivated tongues, while they are still in their rude and defective state, abounding in tropes and metaphors.

It may happen, however, that what began in the sense of necessity may be retained from the conviction of utility; that what was contrived to remedy

a defect or to disguise a blemish, may be improved into a means of perfection, and a source of beauty; that what was originally an argument of poverty, may become a test of wealth. The metaphor is necessary to the infancy of language, as a consequence of its imperfection, and of the inadequacy of the powers of expression to the number and variety of ideas; yet in the most finished state of its beauties, it is the most graceful of its embellishments; and in the most enlarged and expressive degree of its powers, it is the most inexhaustible of its sources of abundance; and not merely the poorest and least refined, but the richest, the most copious and cultivated languages in their turn, abound most in metaphors or translated terms.

In like manner, what was once a source of obscurity becomes now a means of clearness; and the metaphor, which in the infancy of language, and the corresponding infancy of intellectual refinement, had a tendency to confuse the apprehension of things, by confounding the use of words, acquires from the force and liveliness of its effect, the name of a *lumen orationis*. It is easier to borrow words when they are wanted, than to invent them; and even new ideas, clothed in an old and familiar garb, are more likely to be understood at first sight, by means of their dress, than in a garb entirely new; especially when even the old dress is suited to the new subject, and the metaphor is founded in that just and proper analogy between the new idea and the old, which is essential to its use, in all instances, where it is rightly applied.

On the same principle the use of significant actions, though more characteristic of a state of sim-

plicity than one of refinement, and more proper for the infancy, than the maturity of knowledge—may always be serviceable as a means of moral instruction: and while every such action in itself is something obscure and ambiguous, yet when duly cleared up and explained, it may give wonderful force and pointedness of meaning, to the lesson which it conveys. None of the conceptions of the mind is ever in itself so distinct, as the impressions of sense; and there are some ideas which it is not easy adequately to convey, under any circumstances, except by an association with sensible objects. The rudiments of intellectual knowledge are communicated to children through the inlets of the natural senses, and by means of their proper subject-matter. Capacities too feeble to comprehend an abstract idea, proposed by itself, may be made to perceive its meaning, under the garb of some real or imaginary resemblance to a familiar object. The imitative arts of music, painting, or sculpture, in the range and compass of their power of representation, are much inferior to the sister arts of eloquence and poetry: but within their proper sphere, and in the delineation of their proper objects, they possess a clearness, a definiteness, an energy, which belong to nothing but the direct impressions of the senses, as the sight, the hearing, the touch; impressions which description by language, whether in prose or in verse, may partially indeed emulate, but can never so forcibly convey.

The Old Testament abounds in examples of the use of symbolical actions, or of instruction conveyed by signs^b. The New Testament too supplies other

^b See for instance, Isaiah xx. 2—4—Jeremiah xiii. 1—11:

instances of them besides the present : but they are neither so numerous in their occurrence, nor so com-

xviii. 2—6 : xix : xxiv : xxv. 15—17 : xxvii. 2, 3. xxviii. 10 : xxxii. 6—15 : xxxv : xliii. 8—10 :—Ezekiel iii. 24—27 : iv : v : viii—ix. 1—7 : xii. 1—20 : xxiv. 15—24 : xxxiii. 21, 22 : xxxvii. 16, &c. Cf. also 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28 : 1 Kings xi. 29—31 : xxii. 11, &c.

Herodotus, ii. 172. represents Amasis, king of Egypt, as conveying a moral lesson to his subjects by a remarkable action. Livy, xxi. 42. tells how Hannibal in like manner, animated the courage of his soldiers, to prefer a glorious death to a disgraceful existence in slavery. Sertorius also (Plutarch. Sertorius, 16.) taught his followers by an example, that time, patience, and perseverance would gradually effect more, than mere force and violence, however furious and impetuous, could effect at once. The Scythians, as Herodotus relates, (iv. 131, 132.) sent Darius, king of Persia, when he invaded their country, a present of a mouse, a bird, a frog, and five arrows, leaving him to find out the meaning of the present for himself : which according to the interpretation of Gobryas, one of his nobles, implied that unless the Persians could go under ground like mice, or take wing into the air like birds, or dive under the water like frogs, they could not escape the arrows of the Scythians. Cf. the same story in Clemens Alexandrinus, who relates it apparently from the Persica of Ctesias : ii. 671. Strom. v. cap. 8. *ad princip.*

This part of the Stromateis of Clemens relates entirely to the subject in question ; of the disguising and conveying of knowledge, moral, philosophical, or religious, by types, similitudes, figures, material representations, parabolic allusions, and the like : Strom. v. capp. 4—8. He reckons up the *adyta* in the Egyptian temples, like the vail in the Hebrew sanctuary ; their modes of writing, the *ἐπιστολογραφική*, *ἱερατική*, and *ἱερογλυφική*, respectively ; the latter divided into the *κυριολογική* and the *συμβολική*, which last is minutely described : the oracles of the Grecian temples ; the apophthegms of their wise men ; the allegories of their poets, Orpheus, Linus, Musæus, Hesiod, Homer, under which so much more is meant than meets the ear ; the *σύμβολα Πυθαγόρα*, or dark sayings of Pythagoras, of which many examples, and their explanations, are given : the dress of the

plicated in their circumstances, nor so uniform in their design, as those of the Old. Such actions in the Old Testament have commonly one object only in view; the adumbration of some future event, under a sensible representation of one kind or another. Those of the New are of a mixed character; and few as they are, some of them are vehicles of prophecy, others of purely moral instruction. The act of Agabus, when he caused his own hands and feet to be bound with the girdle of St. Paul, to intimate that Paul himself should be bound in like manner by the Jews of Jerusalem, was of the former description^c; to which we may add the two miracles of the draught of fishes on the lake of Galilee, one before, and the other after the resurrection of our Lord; but both with the same symbolical meaning. As to any other occasions, on which our Lord himself made use of an outward act, the more strongly and clearly to convey some moral lesson, so far as the gospel history has made them known to us, they are these four: first, when on two several

Jewish high priest; the materials and constitution of the temple; the whole *ἅγιον κοσμηδόν* in short: a variety of Egyptian symbols, usages, and devices: why the temple of Minerva was always *sub dio*, or open to the sky; (viz. to express the majesty and omnipresence of the deity, a thing to be conceived rather than seen;) why a sphinx was placed at the vestibule of their temples; (viz. to shew that the nature of God was enigmatical and mysterious;) the hieroglyphical meaning of the sun in a ship, or on a crocodile; the boy and old man at Diospolis; the hawk; the fish; the crocodile; eyes or ears, formed of the precious metals, and dedicated in the temples; the lion; the ox; the horse; the sphinx; the ibis; with a great deal more to the same effect, equally curious and minute. Cf. Cyrill. *Contra Julianum*, ix. 299. D—300. E.

^c Acts xxi 10—14.

occasions he placed a little child in the midst of his disciples ; secondly, when he washed the feet of the apostles ; thirdly, when, at the institution of the eucharist, he took and brake the bread which represented his body, before he gave it to the disciples ; and fourthly, when to intinate the communication of the Holy Ghost by him, and its reception as so communicated by them, he breathed on them^d. And on all these occasions, as was naturally to be expected in the use of a significant action with a moral design, the intention of the act was declared or implied at the time.

The act of our Lord, then, in placing a little child in the midst of the twelve, before he said any thing in answer to their question, was designed either to supply that answer—to save the necessity of any additional explanation—or if he intended to reply to the question, to prepare the way for the verbal declara-

^d I am aware that many of our Saviour's miracles may be regarded in the light of significant actions—with a prophetic import—as his changing the water into wine ; his feeding the five, and afterwards the four, thousand ; his cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, and raising the dead. I am aware too that he accompanied his miracles once or twice with a preliminary act—of a significant nature ; as when he touched the ear with his finger, and the tip of the tongue with his spittle, of one who was deaf and dumb, before he was cured ; when he made clay with his spittle, and anointed the eyes of another, and sent him to the pool of Siloam to wash, before he was restored to sight. The gospel history supplies many examples of this sort ; but they are not strictly instances of actions made use of for a moral or didactic purpose, and so far in lieu of teaching by words. His taking up little children into his arms, and blessing them, would be more to the point had it been done expressly, and of his own accord, for the sake of the moral lesson which he drew in such instances, from the example of the little child.

tion—to give emphasis and perspicuity to the doctrine, about to follow; by an appeal to the senses of its hearers. On the former occasion, he said, in reference to the subject of their dispute, “If any man “will be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of “all,” (Mark ix. 35,) before he took the child up in his arms: and then, while holding him in that tender and expressive attitude, he subjoined, as St. Luke informs us, ix. 48, “For he that is least among you “all, the same (*this one*) shall be great.” The act which followed on the former declaration, must therefore have implied, that by becoming the last of all and servant of all, nothing less was intended than becoming *as a little child*; and the declaration which followed on the act, that by becoming as a little child, nothing less was meant than becoming *as the least of all*; while both would conspire to intimate, that to become as a little child, and so far as the least of all, was to take the surest method of becoming *the greatest* of all.

On this second occasion, however, the act of setting a child before the eyes of the apostles, precedes any reply of our Lord’s to their question: and had the import of the act been mistaken, or had the end designed by it, failed of its effect before, this was what might naturally be done, to make it more expressive, and to draw their attention more pointedly to it, on another occasion. The verbal declaration which follows, presupposes the act as much as the inquiry which produced it; implying both the presence of a little child, in the emblematical character with which it was invested for the occasion—and being critically accommodated to the terms of the question itself.

We may conceive our Lord, after having performed such a preliminary action before he answered such a question, to have spoken to his disciples, as follows: “ You have inquired of me, which
“ is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. I have
“ set before you a visible answer to that inquiry.
“ This little child represents the greatest and no-
“ blest in the kingdom of God, and teaches you
“ what you must become, and what you must do, if
“ you would be highly esteemed and advanced there-
“ in. You are thinking of honours, such as the
“ world has to bestow; and of the means of at-
“ taining to them, such as are ordinarily instru-
“ mental in leading to worldly advancement: and
“ in the promotion of your present object, each is
“ ambitious of outstripping another; each is jealous
“ of being left behind by another. But of a truth
“ I say unto you, unless ye be converted into per-
“ sons of another frame and temper of mind; and
“ unless ye become once more like little children,
“ like new-born babes—so far from arriving at
“ honours and dignities in the kingdom of heaven,
“ ye cannot so much as gain admission into it.
“ With respect, then, to your question, which is the
“ greatest in the kingdom of heaven, whosoever
“ shall humble himself like to this little child; the
“ same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”
xviii. 3, 4.

We observe then, that the condition preliminary to entering into the kingdom of heaven, or what is the same thing, the kingdom of God, is defined to be, the condition of being converted and becoming as little children. We need not inquire at present into the meaning of the phrase, kingdom of God, whether

it stands for the literal kingdom of God hereafter, or for the gospel dispensation, the reception and profession of Christianity ; because, so far as the condition in question is concerned, the two senses are in fact the same. There is no admission into the former of these kingdoms, except for those who have been previously admitted into the latter ; and whatever impediment, let, or obstacle, whether moral or otherwise, might be an insuperable bar to admission into the kingdom of heaven, would operate not less effectually as a cause of exclusion from the gospel dispensation : as a bar to the reception and profession of Christianity.

Now in the conversation with Nicodemus, John iii. 5.^e the same condition of entering into the kingdom of heaven was affirmed to be, the condition of being regenerate, that is, of being born anew : which it further appeared, was in each individual's case the special work of the Holy Ghost. It is evident that this condition absolutely coincides with the former ; since to become as a little child is to be born, as it were, anew ; to become like a new-born babe. To be converted, then, or changed into another person, is to be *regenerated* ; to become as a little child, is the same thing as to be *born anew*. We may conclude, therefore, that the emblem of a little child, when proposed as the type of the proper subjects of admission into the kingdom of heaven—of the best fitted for the reception of the gospel dispensation, of the real, sincere, and genuine professor of Christianity—is the emblem of a changed, a converted, a regenerate and new-born person.

It is observable also that in each of the sermons

on the mount, both which begin with beatitudes, that is, the promise of a particular blessing to a corresponding particular Christian virtue; the first place is assigned to poverty of spirit^f, which is the gospel designation for humbleness or lowliness of mind, the reverse of pride, arrogance, self-conceit or self-confidence, in general. The blessing attached to this grace is, that “theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” or “God;” theirs, in the sense of right, of property, of possession, more especially. Such being the case, it is a natural inference that that which entitles to the possession of this kingdom, must also be necessary to entering into it. If poverty of spirit confers a right of property in the enjoyment of this kingdom, poverty of spirit must also be a condition of admission into it.

Upon another occasion, however, and a later than any which has yet been considered, when little children, or babes, were brought to Christ, that he might lay his hands on them, and the disciples would have prevented their access to him; we find him assigning this reason why they should be brought to him, why they were most fit to receive peculiar marks of his favour and regard; “For of such as these is the kingdom of heaven,” or “God;”—where also the language of the original implies that the right, the property, the possession of that kingdom belonged to them, and to such as them, in particular. Comparing this declaration with the former, which said the same thing of the poor in spirit, we must conclude that the image of a little child—of

^f Matt. v. 2. Harm, P. ii. 23. Luke vi. 20. Harm P. iii. 5.

^g Matt. xix. 14; Mark x. 14; Luke xviii. 16. Harm. P. iv. 51.

the babe in Christ—besides the power of denoting the new-born or regenerate Christian generally; stands also, or may be conceived to stand, for the poor in spirit—for the humbleminded among Christians in particular.

The discourse which took its rise with the answer to the question just put, extends to a considerable length, and is not confined to that one topic. The most comprehensive division which we could make of it, would be into two parts: the first from ver. 1—14; the second from ver. 15 to the end of the chapter. Each of these parts is capable of subdivisions; and the subject-matter of these subdivisions is perceptibly connected throughout; but the general topic or argument of the one, is not the same with that of the other.

Now throughout the first of these members, the same allusion to the presence of a little child, and in the same figurative capacity, or in one more or less akin to it, with which the discourse commenced, continues to be preserved; as appears from the frequent repetition of the phrase, (ἐνὸς τῶν μικρῶν τούτων,) “one of these little ones,” at different intervals. A comparison of passages, however, proves, that the allusion in the latter instances (from ver. 5, for example, downwards) is to one of the flock of Christ, in general—to a Christian of ordinary powers, attainments, or capacities, but of strictly evangelical qualities—to an honest and sincere, but not a wise, a gifted, or profoundly learned believer in Christ.

It seems, then, that the same general image of a little child, which was employed at the beginning of the Discourse, to denote a converted or regenerate person, previous to admission into the kingdom of

heaven, stands in the sequel of it, for a Christian of that description himself. It is the model both of what a man must become, before he can be a Christian ; and of what he is, when he has become one. These two things are connected as consequent and antecedent ; or if we will, as effect and cause—since whatever is necessary to the first being or production of any thing, cannot be unessential to its subsequent continuance and preservation. If a man must first become as a little child, to become a Christian ; he must afterwards continue as a little child, to continue a Christian. The little child is the model of what the natural man must become, in order to be regenerate and therefore to be a Christian ; and it is also the model of what a man, once regenerated and therefore become a Christian, in opposition to the natural man, is.

The discourse of our Lord, then, which began with a particular reference to the dispute of the disciples, and was first directed to rebuke the spirit which actuated that dispute, soon expanded itself according to his practice, and passed on to topics of a more comprehensive, yet still of a kindred nature. The bond of connexion between these and the original subject of discussion, was the subserviency of the same instrumental medium to both—the capacity of the same sign for a variety of senses—the unity of the same emblematical character, even as contemplated in different points of view. Between the first formation of any thing, and its ultimate state, there is a close association of ideas. In the beginning of a natural process, we cannot but look forward to the end ; in the flower, we see the fruit ; in the first germ of the seed, the future plant ; in the babe, we

already behold the man. The quality which is necessary to becoming a Christian, very naturally suggests what the true Christian actually is. The natural man in order to the former effect must be regenerate; therefore the proper emblem of such a predisposing quality, is that of the new birth. The regenerate man, who is the example of the latter, is such as the new birth has made him: therefore the attributes of the infant character are peculiarly the prototype of his. In the one case, the little child is the emblem of regeneration or conversion; in the other, of its effects on the character—the humility, simplicity, and innocence of the Christian.

In considering therefore the nature of the present significant action, we should not know which to admire most; whether the virtue and expressiveness of the sign made use of, or the tenderness and benignity of disposition, as well as the wisdom, evinced in its selection for the purpose in view. That to become as a little child, however necessary to gain admission to the privileges of the gospel dispensation, must be metaphorically understood, is self-evident; that there is a moral truth and fitness, as well as an exquisite beauty in the metaphor, may easily be seen, upon reflection. Almost every language has some peculiar kind of description, for a favourite character; some epithet of regular occurrence, for what is considered the distinguishing excellence in the complex of virtues. The image of a little child, to denote the meekness, the purity, the guilelessness of the Christian character, is confined to the phraseology of the gospel.

There is, indeed, in the Old Testament one passage, which seems to approximate, in this mode of

describing the truly religious character, both to the ideas and the language of the gospel. The Psalmist says of himself, "That his heart was not haughty, "neither his eyes lofty: neither did he exercise "himself in great matters, or in things too high for "him: that he had behaved and quieted himself as "a child that was weaned of his mother; that his "soul (chastised and humbled doubtless by a godly "discipline) was even as a weaned child^h." But a weaned child is not of necessity a little child, and much less, a new-born or infant child; nor in merely comparing himself to such a child, does he go to the length of our Saviour's doctrine, which teaches that whosoever would enter into the kingdom of heaven, and be fit either for the profession of his religion here, or for the reward of that profession hereafter, must not simply resemble a little child, but actually be converted, and in heart and disposition, in the capability of learning, and in the inclination to receive and practise, every needful point of gospel truth and gospel discipline, must become as a little child himself. There is no access to his kingdom, but to such little children; there is no proficiency in his school, but to such learners as these. No system of morality, except that of Christ, ever assigned to poverty of spirit the first rank among its cardinal virtues; no conception of the perfect character, however formed or of whatever ingredients consisting, which presented itself to the imagination of any merely human moralist, until it was delineated by the original and expressive imagery of the gospel, ever thought of finding its counterpart in the attributes of infancy; or of proposing such a pattern of

^h Psalm cxxxix. 1, 2.

imitation as the little child, much less, as the new-born babe.

The moral qualities—the habitudes and dispositions of the human mind—are indeed often represented under the likeness of supposed resemblances to external objects. The dove in most languages, is the emblem of simplicity; the serpent of cunning; the lamb of meekness. Vegetable nature, as well as animal, supplies the grounds of a variety of similar analogies. The flowers of the field in general, or some in particular above the rest, are familiar images of moral purity and innocence; the vine, the willow, and all the race of lowly shrubs, are considered proper emblems of an humble, retired, and unambitious turn of mind; the towering oak, or stately cedar, of pride, ambition, grandeur.

But these modes of illustrating the qualities of the human character, by the properties of external nature, are more poetical than just. Man has little in common with the animal creation; and it is but an imaginary likeness which connects his moral affections with the flowers of the field, or the trees of the forest. Between man however, and his own kind, there subsists a community of nature, as well as a sympathy of feeling, which is not impaired even when we compare together two such apparently ill-assorted and disproportionate things, as the full-grown man and the new-born infant. With all this difference externally, there is still much in common between them. The body of the man was once the body of the child; the soul of the man is still the same as the soul of the child. In transforming the body of the child into the body of the adult, it would not be easy to decide whether it is a change

that takes place, or an expansion; that is, whether the substance or the accidents of the body are affected by it: but in maturing the soul of the child into the soul of the man, we may rest assured it is no change of the essence, but the developement of the properties, which is the cause of the effect. We must have been children both in body and soul, before we could have become men in either respect; and though Christianity does not require us to continue children in either respect, nor yet to become even *as* children in that one of them which regards the body, (for that would be to require a man to enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born; as Nicodemus understood the words of our Lord, in a gross and carnal senseⁱ;) yet it does require us not only to become, but to continue *as* children, in the other respect which regards the soul: however difficult, or even impossible in the case of the adult—that is of the man of full-grown and confirmed moral habits or intellectual capacities—such a change may appear. And in this union of the character and perfection of the man, on the one hand, with the attributes and imperfection of the infant, on the other, the peculiarity of the Christian doctrine concerning the necessity of the new birth as the first beginning of the Christian's career, to the greatest proficiency in the virtues of his profession, as its final result, may be said to consist. The child, in the literal sense of the word, is the emblem of weakness, destituteness, ignorance, imperfection: the child, in the sense of the regenerate Christian, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; the richest in Christian graces; the most confirmed in spiritual strength,

ⁱ John iii. 4.

and most advanced in spiritual improvement; the pattern of Christian loveliness; the acme of Christian moral dignity; in a word, the full-grown man in Christ, and little inferior to the perfection of the angelical character.

Now all this seems to be the case, because the regenerate Christian, who has once truly become so, never ceases to be what the new birth has made him, whatever else he may afterwards become; the fundamental properties of the Christian character, such as they are implied in becoming like to little children, are still retained, whatever other excellences may be superinduced upon them. The effect is therefore the same as if the subject continued still to grow, and yet always remained a child; a thing which we know to be impossible in the physical process, which affects the expansion of the bodily frame, or develops the powers and capacities of the soul; but is not impossible in the supernatural one, which affects both the change of the natural into the new or regenerate man—and develops the spiritual capacities of after-improvement, thereby acquired.

The condition of becoming like unto little children, is attached even to the first admission into the kingdom of heaven: the spiritual change which takes place in the soul, at the new birth—at the renovation of the natural man, with his previous powers, dispositions, and faculties—must take place preparatory to that event. But if admission into this kingdom is but preliminary to continuance in it, and continuance therein does not imply less than was necessary to gain admission into it, but if possible something more; the infancy of Christian proficiency is not to be confounded with its maturity, nor is the

latter to be considered as more than implied in the former; as something which is promised by it, and may ultimately arise out of it, but as yet is not developed from it.

Childhood in the order of nature, is the rudiment of manhood; but manhood is the perfection of childhood. The bud is necessary to the flower, and prior to it; but they are both completed in the fruit. If it is possible to grow in grace, and to pass from strength to strength; to add one perfection of the character to another—the little child in Christ in due time may be ripened into the man in Christ, yet still continue a child: the original excellences of his character may be enriched by the addition of many more, without losing their existence or ceasing to retain their individual distinctions and properties. The new born or regenerate soul, beginning with the body which God has formed it, and building on the foundation laid for it in Christ; may go on in a just and natural, though an insensible order of progression, answering to the gradual and silent increase of the bodily growth—until it arrives at the measure of the fulness of its height in Christ; which may as much exceed the first beginnings of its spiritual career, the mere *promise* of the little child in Christ, as the strength of the man surpasses the feebleness of the infant, and the dimensions and stature of the man the diminutiveness of the infant.

To become as little children, then, may be the first step towards entering upon the spiritual career of perfection; but it is not every thing which is necessary to that perfection. It is an essential step to improvement and growth in grace; without taking which we must for ever linger—unable to start

in the race that is set before us; but it is not the whole which is required in order to run it—to bring us to the goal which we aspire to reach, or to secure us the prize which we hope to obtain. The natural man, the unregenerate temper, the dispositions, habitudes, feelings, propensities, which are born with us into the world, or formed within us upon the capabilities which nature has given us—are a weight and an encumbrance, which would totally disqualify us for our spiritual course; and must be cast off, (as their clothes and bodily encumbrances are laid aside, by such as would run a race, or have any thing to do that requires the free use of their limbs,) before we can even set out upon it. Such natural dispositions or acquired habits, of whatever kind they may be, and in whatever way they may shew themselves, so far as they are all more or less evil, are bars and obstructions even to the possibility of admission into the kingdom of God. We must leave them at the vestibule of that kingdom; or while we retain them still, and would carry them with us, we shall not be permitted to cross the threshold or enter the door. There is no access for pride, or arrogance, or self-conceit, into that blessed society; none for ambition, or avarice; for the thirst of power, or money: none for envy, guile, resentment, malice, lust, revenge, or any other evil thing. All these passions then, must we leave behind us, if we would enter into the kingdom of heaven; and not only must no such vice or imperfection be carried with us, but if possible the opposite virtues and perfections. We must begin with being lowly, humble-minded, distrustful of ourselves, unassuming, unambitious; open, simple, guileless, candid, charitable,

meek, forgiving, patient, chaste, and pure. In all, or in most of these respects, children, whatever be the reason, are appropriate patterns of imitation even to moral agents; and as such may be proposed to men. The best disposed for spiritual improvement is he who begins his Christian career, with conforming himself in such fundamental points of his duty as these, to the simplicity of the infantine character; and whatever degree of excellence besides he attains to in the course of it, who never ceases, in these respects, to resemble his prototype; but as he began with being a little child, so far as the absence of all the evil qualities, opposed to these, was concerned—so he continues to be, and ends his career with being, such a child still.

The word which the evangelists make use of, to describe the kind of child which our Saviour on both these occasions, proposed to his disciples as the model of their imitation, is *παιδίον*; a word which may mean properly a child, such as we should understand by a little boy or girl; in contradistinction to a mere babe. On the last, however, of the occasions before referred to, when little children were brought to him—what St. Matthew and St. Mark express by *παιδιά*, St. Luke expresses by *βρέφη*: and that properly denotes mere babes or infants. The proper model, then, of the regenerate Christian character is the babe or infant, as such; or children only so far as they resemble, in certain respects, mere babes or infants still. And this distinction is not without its importance to the apprehension of the justness and fitness of the proposed model itself, as the abstract standard of perfection of a certain kind.

It would be contrary to reason and to experience

alike, were we to maintain that even the character of children, as such, is pure and perfect; that no symptoms of moral evil, no kind or degree of the original taint of human nature, are discoverable even in childhood. If there be, indeed, any greater measure of positive goodness, or rather any less proportion of positive evil, in human nature at one period of life than at another, surely it is during the state of childhood. And what would hold good of children, *a fortiori* would be true of infants; or of children while they are still, in all moral or responsible points of view, to be considered no better than infants.

The possibility of moral evil must exist even in infants; or actual moral evil would not exist even in men. It is just as impossible for the body of the infant to grow up, and to retain the dimensions and lineaments of childhood, as for the soul of the infant to expand and develop itself into the soul of the adult, preserving its original innocence. But as bodily distempers, inherited by children from their parents, very often do not shew themselves until they are advanced in years, so the native malignant dispositions, inherited by every child of Adam, are not all at once perceptible in little children; require time and space to ripen and disclose them.

The purity then of infants, or of the little child as such while it is still an infant, is a very obvious quality of its nature; and a very fit pattern of moral excellence, whilst it continues or seems to continue such. Let it be remembered, however, that it is not an absolute purity, but a comparative. It is less than the perfection of angels: it is greater than the depravity of men. They bring into the

world no defect either of body or soul, but what they contracted in their mother's womb; and the latter evil of this description, for a time does not appear. From those vices, by wanting which they so appropriately represent the honest and simple-minded Christian, they are actually free; because by the law of their being, they are not yet capable of them. The very imperfection of their faculties both of body and soul, secures children for a time, as effectually from the vices of pride, ambition, guile, malice, and the like, as the perfection of his own nature does, a superior being. It is as being free from voluntary, self-contracted, and accountable evil of any kind, that babes or children are proposed as the models of what Christians ought to be, and must become: with this difference, that what infants are by the constitution of their own nature, and because they cannot be otherwise, the man must become of himself, under the aid, direction, and operation of the Holy Ghost.

Regeneration, or being born again, indeed, in its first and more immediate sense, is a work that concerns the *adult*; the subject of which should be the soul of the *adult*. Of these properly will their being born again, as a necessary condition to admission into the kingdom of heaven, be understood with the greatest force, because with the greatest antithesis and contrast between what they were before, and what they are supposed to be rendered by the process. Children or infants, so far as they partake in the corruption of a sinful nature as well as adults, stand in need of its regeneration and purification as well as they. But to talk of the *new birth* of the *new born* babe, is not so striking, nor with the spi-

ritual or moral sense implied by it, so appropriate a mode of speaking, as to talk of the *new birth* of the *full-grown* man. The difficulty of entering again into the womb, and being born anew in the literal sense of the terms, was felt by Nicodemus at once, when this doctrine was first propounded to him in such terms: and the difficulty of supposing the soul of the man to be born anew, in such a manner as again to resemble the soul of the child in such and such qualities, is almost as great to merely human apprehension.

The work of regeneration, then, whether it be entirely supernatural or not, may well be considered such as to require the cooperation of a power from on high. And though upon neither of the present occasions, where the necessity of the effect itself in a spiritual point of view, was so plainly declared, is the cause also specified which must bring it about; yet in the conversation with Nicodemus, that effect was at once referred to its true source, the agency of the Holy Ghost: the appointed method of whose operation, after the institution of baptism and the formal commencement of Christianity, was through the medium of that sacrament. Water and the Spirit are specified conjointly, as the two essential concurrent causes in producing the conversion or change of the natural man; the new birth or regeneration of the soul; whatever else may cooperate with them to the same effect.

The waters of Jordan, in one singular instance, being affused on the body of the Syrian Naaman, were rendered available to the operation of an effect on the corporeal substance of the leper—something like that which seemed so impossible to Nicodemus:

the bringing of his flesh again as the flesh of a little child. The laver of regeneration, the mystical efficacy of water in baptism, conjoined with the Spirit, may produce an analogous change in the frame and temper of the soul; which compared with what the subject was before, or what the subject would be without it, in effect or reality will amount to being born again; to becoming altogether a new man.

Compare the character and conduct of our Lord's own disciples, before and after the day of Pentecost, when they first received the baptism of the Spirit; and they will not appear the same persons. Can any one doubt then, that they must meanwhile have been changed, converted, turned into other men, and to all intents and purposes born anew or regenerated? Their principles, views, inclinations, tempers, became thenceforward so different from what they had been before; and yet so uniform, consistent, habitual, and regular ever after—that nothing will account for the change, but the supposition of such a regeneration; the work of the Holy Ghost upon them. When St. John, for example, was still in that frame of mind, which induced him to intercede with Jesus to call down fire on the heads of the Samaritans, as Elijah had done; will it be supposed that he was capable of writing such an epistle as his catholic one, (not to say such a gospel as his own is, in particular)? an epistle, which breathes in every page the spirit of Christian charity in its utmost perfection—of brotherly love, and of universal benevolence.

After all, it should be remembered that in a mixed character, the good part only, and not the evil, is to be supposed that which we are required to imitate in

practice. In wisdom, power, and knowledge, men are incomparably superior to children; but in simplicity, meekness, and innocence, children may be, and often are superior to men. Moral perfection, under all circumstances, is held in greater estimation with the Deity, than intellectual; and among moral qualities, humility, honesty, simple-mindedness, and the kindred virtues, are those which are pronounced to be of chief price in his sight. Could the peculiar excellences of the infantine character, such as render it so engaging and amiable in a moral point of view, be combined and blended with the superior intellectual attainments of the manly, which command our respect and admiration; the result would be, as in the union of the simplicity of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent, an harmonious mixture of distinct qualities, neither of them sufficient for perfection without the other, but in conjunction, a very consummate result. Hence it is that St. Paul, repeating this declaration of the necessity of becoming as little children, in order to begin and to grow in grace;—yet supposes the intellectual proficiency of men to go along with and qualify the moral simplicity and innocence of children; and *vice versa*. “In malice be ye children; but in understanding be men^k.”

To return however from this digression—it appears from St. Matthew’s account that Jesus subjoined on verse 4, merely the words of verse 5: “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me:” but from St. Mark’s, and from St. Luke’s, that he added to the same declaration before, first, previous to the interruption

^k 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

produced by the observation ascribed to John—the words of Mark ix. 37: “And whoso shall receive me, “receiveth not me, but him that sent me;” and after it, Mark ix. 41: “For whoso shall give you a “cup of water to drink in my name, because ye are “Christ’s, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose “his reward.” These particulars St. Matthew probably omitted, because they were not now repeated, or because they had been in substance recorded by him at the end of his account of the apostolic charge, in a former part of his gospel¹.

The connexion between this new topic and the preceding, must be sought for in the double sense of the image of the little child; both as the model of what a Christian, to be regenerate, must become, and as such a character, when regenerated and changed, itself. But even such a character may be proposed or contemplated in more points of view than one; and in what capacity it begins now to be exhibited, may be shewn as follows.

To be *received*, implies to be *sent*, in the name of Christ; and to be *sent* in his name, implies to *appear* in his behalf, to act by or with a commission derived from him. In such language does Christ himself, in a variety of passages, (more especially of St. John’s Gospel,) speak of his own coming *in the name* of the Father; that is, upon an errand appointed by the Father, and with an authority derived from him. Hence as Christ, by coming in such a capacity, came as the Shiloh or Apostle of the Father; so those, who should come and be received in the name of Christ, would come and be received as the apostles, or Shilohs of Christ. The

¹ Chap. x. 40—42. Harm. P. iii. 26.

point of view then in which the little child, whether as an emblematical or a real personage, is now represented, is that of a deputy or vicegerent of Christ; an emissary and minister, coming in his name and acting in his stead, upon some work of his appointment; that is, no doubt, the work of propagating the gospel.

Now, though we know it is not possible for one person *actually* to be another, and therefore for one person *actually* to be received in and through another; yet it is very conceivable for one person to be *virtually* another, and to be *virtually* received in and by the reception of another. This is the case, when one person is represented by another; when one person appears and acts as the instrument, the deputy, the *locum tenens* of another. Persons who stand in such relations to others, have no independent, individual character of their own; they sustain a vicarious personality—the individual character of another person is transferred to them, in which, so long as they retain their peculiar relation to him, their own is merged and lost.

On this principle it was, that our Lord declared so often that, whosoever received him as *sent* by the Father, as *coming* in the *name* of the Father—received the Father; and on the same principle, it is here said, that whoso should receive one of the little ones coming in the name of Christ, should receive Christ. Christ was the deputed instrument, the authorized representative—in one word, the *ambassador*, of the Father; who sustained his character, and was to be considered as acting for him, in the discharge of that commission, received from him, which he came to perform: and the emissaries of

Christianity were the deputed organs, the authorized representatives, the *ambassadors* in a word of Christ—who, in the discharge of their proper part, both appeared in his name and acted in his stead.

Now, if the work or commission, in the discharge of which Christ appeared as the apostle and representative of the Father, was so intimately connected with that, in the performance of which the emissaries of the gospel went forth and acted as the apostles and deputies of Christ; that they cannot be distinguished asunder—they must be regarded as virtually one and the same—it follows, that by transferring his *personal* relation to the emissaries of Christianity, Jesus Christ transferred his *vicarious* relation also; that is, the vicarious relation of a duly commissioned and accredited emissary of the gospel, which was first and properly the vicarious relation of one who represented Jesus Christ in a certain respect, became by virtue of that relation, the vicarious relation of one who represented the Father in the same; because he represented him whom the Father had deputed in his own stead, in the very same capacity in which Jesus Christ had now deputed others in *his* stead.

If such be the case, it follows, at least by implication, that if they, who received one of these little ones in his proper vicarious relation to Christ, received Christ; and if they who received Christ, received *him* in his proper vicarious relation to the Father; then they who received one of these little ones in his proper vicarious relation to Christ, received him also in the proper vicarious relation of Christ to the Father; that is, the same little one who represented Christ, under such circumstances through Christ

represented the Father^m. Now what a glorious privilege, what a combination of illustrious relations, would this be! The two persons in the holy Trinity, the Father and the Son alike—the fountain head and original of Deity, as well as the emanation of the Paternal, the underived and eternal essence, reflected in the brightness of his glory, in the express image of his person—in one word, the undivided Godhead, the supreme Majesty of heaven, the King of kings and Lord of lords—both represented on earth—and by whom? By a little one—by a *babe* in Christ. What ambassador, of what earthly monarch ever boasted of such a distinction, or ever sustained such a character as this? the very idea of which, as the peculiar privilege of the meek and lowly, the innocent and guileless, the pure and undefiled, the simple and honest, but not the intellectual, the learned, the wise or gifted, among mankind, could not have been conceived, had not our Lord himself assured us of it. The most sublime and exalted of angelic natures, *per se*, was not competent to sustain such a character—would not have been worthy by the simple perfection of his own nature, to represent the supreme Deity; and yet a little child, a Christian who should merely resemble a little child in the moral qualifications of his character, is pronounced the fittest and most appropriate representative, and as such the chosen and accredited vicegerent below, of the King of heaven above. We may with reason believe that those must be destined to the highest

^m Οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῖν εὐηγγελίσθησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ. ἐξεπέμφθη ὁ Χριστὸς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Clemens Rom i. ad Corinthios, cap. 42.

honours in his kingdom hereafter, whom he himself has specially distinguished by so great a mark of his favour and approbation, and by investing them with such a relation to himself, in this world.

It follows from the same vicarious relation of these little ones to Christ, that the least good office performed to one of them, in his capacity of a minister deputed by and representing Christ; even no more than the gift of a cup of cold water, in the name of Christ and because he was one of those who belonged to *him*—must be a good office virtually done to Christ; the obligation of which must be personally felt by him; and the reward due to which, at the proper time, must be personally bestowed by him.

Whether the emissaries of Christianity, who are thus supposed to represent the person and to stand in the stead of Jesus Christ, are to be considered the apostles as such, or not, is a matter of indifference, so far as concerns their common relation to Christ himself. The proper character in which even the apostles appeared at first, was doubtless that of preachers of the gospel; and whatever other character they might afterwards acquire, they never ceased to retain that one. It is certain, however, that in the work of propagating the gospel, great numbers were early engaged besides the apostles; and that great numbers continued at all times to labour in the same ministry along with them. We cannot, indeed, suppose that the business of diffusing Christianity, by whatever instruments and in whatever directions, was carried on at random—without a mutual understanding, and a mutual cooperation among its instruments; without order, method, or concert. Such

a supposition would be contradictory both to reason and to testimony. It appears, however, that even from the first, and much more in the course of time, so far as regarded the work of merely preaching the gospel and making fresh converts to Christianity—the personal instrumentality of the apostles was considered either not indispensable, or not sufficient: that they either might have or must have, and certainly that they had, coadjutors in that part of their office more especially. The order of evangelists, is mentioned as a distinct order in the church; and the name of evangelist properly denotes a preacher of the gospel merely. The order of evangelists must have been early instituted; for Philip the deacon is mentioned as Philip the evangelist. The order of evangelists too is placed after that of the apostles and of the prophets; which implies that in point of numbers it was an order much more considerable than either of those two: that is, on the same principle that we may take it for granted the order of prophets comprehended many more than the order of apostles, so may we presume that the class of evangelists included many more than that of prophets.

On this subject, however, it is not necessary to enter into details. One thing appears from the history of the Acts—that every convert of the gospel, whom the Holy Ghost had supplied with the requisite *χαρίσματα* or gifts, for such a work, was competent, and might consider himself at liberty if he were so inclined, to preach to others the same gospel which he had embraced, and which he professed himself. And in innumerable particular instances, it is capable of proof, or it may be justly presumed,

that persons, under such circumstances, so far from thinking themselves merely at liberty to do this, esteemed it a sacred obligation to attempt it; and in every manner within their power, and in every quarter to which they could find access, to aid the diffusion of the gospel by their individual ministry and cooperation.

We cannot doubt, then, that at all periods of the Christian history, multitudes were actively engaged in the common work of propagating Christianity, who were not apostles, and yet acted by a just and legitimate commission; and therefore, in the same capacity of authorized and accredited representatives and organs of Jesus Christ, as the apostles themselves. Such being the case, it is not the personal distinctions which might, and no doubt, did subsist in a variety of other respects, between an apostle as such, and one of these, their coadjutors in the task of preaching the gospel; (distinctions which in those respects very possibly rendered the personal character of the one incomparably superior to that of the other;) that we ought to consider; but the common qualification in a moral point of view, necessary to them all alike, if they were all alike to be fit for their common task; and the equality of personal dignity and estimation, which the possession of this common qualification should entail upon all alike; upon the lowest in some respects, as well as upon the highest in the same—who yet were on a par in this one instance. The high prerogative of representing Christ, and through Christ, the Father, is attached to the little child as such. An apostle, to stand in that relation, must still be such a little child: and such a little child, who was thereby qua-

lified to stand in the same relation, was so far on a par with an apostle.

“ For look at your calling, brethren,” says St. Paul to the Corinthiansⁿ, (that is, look at the nature and manner of your calling, look at them that call you,) “ that not many *are* wise according to “ the flesh, not many *are* mighty, not many *are* “ noble : but God hath chosen the foolish *things* of “ the world, to make ashamed the wise ; and God “ hath chosen the weak *things* of the world to make “ ashamed the strong *things* :” and the like. The context of this passage shews that in the first words, the writer is drawing the attention of the Corinthians to the peculiar character of the *instruments* by which, not that of the *objects* for which, God had thought proper to carry on the work of propagating the gospel, and subduing the world to Christ. Can we desire, then, a better comment upon our text, to illustrate both what is meant by the little one, as coming in the name of Christ ; and the power and virtue, notwithstanding what he was in himself, derived to him from the name in which he came ? These little ones were not the wise, the eloquent, the mighty, the noble—but the reverse—the ignorant, the unlearned, the poor, the mean, the foolish *things* of the world, as they might appear to an external observer—made choice of to confound the opposite characters to their own, by demonstrating to them what God was able to effect, by instruments the reverse of themselves, and independent of all such aid as their peculiar gifts and advantages, natural or acquired, seemed requisite to bestow.

The thing to be considered then, is the apparent

ⁿ 1 Cor. i. 26. &c.

weakness and inadequacy of the instrumental agency, compared with the efficacy of the accompanying power; both, as displayed in the work of propagating the gospel by ministers possessed of no qualification for the task humanly speaking, except a moral one, which humanly speaking also, seemed the most likely to disqualify them for it altogether. The most humble and honest, the meekest and most gentle, the most innocent and guileless—but withal the simplest and rudest,—of his disciples, as the event proved, were to preach Christ with the greatest efficacy and success: but who, before the event, would have pronounced such persons the most likely to do so; or rather, not have considered them the most likely to be disqualified by their very peculiarities of character, for the task itself? Yet Christ had purposely chosen the simplicity of children like these, to subjugate to his gospel the reasons and understandings of men. If they preached him only with the truth, the sincerity, the single-mindedness, inspired by their character itself, they should preach him most effectually: Christ would be specially present with their feeble but well-meant endeavours, giving them a power and energy which they could not derive from themselves: Christ would act *for* them, as well as *by* them and *with* them. The moral qualifications which must predispose the instrument for such an use and such an effect of his services, were within the power of all, and under divine grace, might be acquired by all, who laboured or might labour in the cause of the gospel. To become as a little child, whatever is implied thereby, must be more or less of a voluntary thing; or it would not be proposed as what every individual convert must do, or be

desirous of doing for himself, previous to his admission into the kingdom of heaven. The natural abilities, the acquired attainments, the eloquence of St. Paul, or even the spiritual learning, the spiritual proficiency, the number and variety of the spiritual graces and endowments of St. Paul, might not be possessed by all, nor within the power and reach of all his fellow labourers in the ministry of the gospel. But the zeal, the diligence, the disinterestedness, the simplicity even of St. Paul, might be emulated by others, and might be possessed by others, however inferior in some respects: and to whatever degree they might be possessed by others as well as by St. Paul, to that degree they would render their possessors as meet instruments, for the furtherance of the Christian religion, and as successful within the proper sphere of their utility, as St. Paul.

Both St. Matthew and St. Mark inform us that after saying thus much on either occasion, Jesus continued his discourse with a declaration to the same effect, and nearly in the same words; "And
 " whoso would offend one of these little ones which
 " believe in me, it is good for him that a millstone
 " were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned
 " in the expanse of the sea."

To this declaration on the present occasion, as appears from St. Matthew, he added the words of verse 7, which he had not done before; "Woe unto
 " the world, because of offences! for it must needs
 " be that offences should come; nevertheless, woe
 " unto that man through whom the offence cometh."
 From this point, the two discourses continue substantially, though not quite verbally, the same, down to verse 9 of St. Matthew, and verse 48 of

St. Mark; after which, on the former occasion, followed verses 49 and 50 of the latter, which were not repeated upon the second.

Now the same emblematical character which was the subject of the discourse before, continues to be the subject of it still: but it is with a specific addition, such as has not yet occurred; that of (τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ)—“one of those which believe in “me.” We have therefore the following gradation and variety in the shades or senses of one and the same image, that of the little child; which it is the more proper to mention now, because no more will be found added to them hereafter. First and originally, it stood for what the natural, unconverted and unregenerate man, to be a Christian, must become; and in that capacity it was the model of the humility, the simplicity, the innocence and purity of the Christian character. Then it was used for what such a person by regeneration has become, that is, for what a regenerate Christian is: and as such for one who sustains, or is morally qualified to sustain, certain relations to Christ. Of these, the relation which we have hitherto considered, is that of the fittest to be his representative, of the instrument chosen and deputed to act in his stead, (and through him, instead of the Father,) in so important a work as the propagation of his gospel: and that which we are about to consider, is the relation of one of the believers in Christ; the most predisposed on the one hand, to believe and to trust in him; and the most worthy on the other, of his care, his solicitude, his protection—a member, in one word, of his fold and flock, the most likely to love, to be attached to, to depend on his shepherd, and the most

deserving, in his turn, of the regard and tenderness of his shepherd. The same qualities which assimilated such an one to the likeness of a little child, originally—the same humble-mindedness, honesty, simplicity, guilelessness—qualify him to stand in this peculiar capacity also. The little child in particular is the fittest exemplar of the believer in Christ whom Christ delights to recognise as his own, and to select as the special object of his care and love; as well as whom he condescends to invest with his vicarious relation to the Father, by commissioning, in his own behalf, as the representative of the Majesty of heaven.

The substance of the two verses which have just been recited, is clearly in reference to one and the same topic, *offences* (or σκάνδαλα). Before, however, we enter upon their consideration, I would observe, that the Greek verb which is rendered “to offend” (σκανδαλίζω), often as it occurs in the New Testament, never has any sense but that of giving or being the cause of, an *offence* or scandal (σκάνδαλον). To offend, then, implies the same thing as to give or to cause a scandal. And with respect to the meaning of the word *scandal*, I will merely observe at present, that it has two, but only two general significations; one, to denote the *cause* or *author*, the other, the *instance* or *matter* of a scandal or offence. It never stands for the *object* of an offence; that is, for the person affected by it, or who suffers from it; always, either for the person who causes it, or for the thing in which it consists and by which it is caused. In the present instance, the sense of the word is the second; that of the thing by which an offence is caused, or in which the of-

fence consists. The person “through whom the “offence cometh,” is plainly distinguished from the matter or instance of the offence.

Again ; were verses 8 and 9 in St. Matthew (agreeing substantially with verses 43—48 in St. Mark) to be set aside, and the seventh verse to be followed directly by the tenth, the unity of the discourse would not be affected thereby, so far as concerns the topic of giving offence with reference to its proper object, one of the little ones who believe in Christ ; but on the contrary, would be rendered more striking. This intermediate part we shall find, concerns not the objects of or sufferers by such offences ; but the authors or causes of them.

Again, whether this intermediate part be retained or wanting, though as to the crime of giving offence—what it is, and in what, and by whom, it is liable to be committed—nothing would be distinctly specified, yet the objects of it, or who they are that are liable to suffer by its effects, are clearly set forth ; viz. the little ones who believe in Christ. And retaining the part in question, we may conjecture something, from the light of the description taken all together, concerning the causes, consequences, and nature of the crime, which may suffice to give a competent idea of it.

For first, it appears from this description, that the consequences of a scandal (that is, a giving of offence, whatever be meant thereby) are fatal both to its objects and to its authors. It is alike dangerous to the parties concerned in it, whether as agents or as patients : it involves the destruction of a body and a soul in either case, or at least in the former. A

woe is denounced against the world, as necessarily to suffer from scandals ; a woe is denounced against the persons, from whom they proceed, as the authors of such consequences.

Connect the end of the discourse on this subject with the beginning—that is, verse 10—14 with 6 and 7 : and it will appear that, unless retrieved by the care and vigilance of others in his behalf, the effect of scandalizing or giving an offence to a little one, is the loss of the little one ; and that loss is nothing less than eternal loss, or the perdition of an immortal soul. And if the substance of the intermediate part be carefully considered, it will also appear, that to have conceived the desire, or formed the idea, from whatever motive, of giving offence to such a little one, is to entertain the desire and to form the idea of a deadly, inexpiable sin ; which if the impulse has been matured into the act—if the first desire has not been repressed by strong and decisive measures, though it may escape with impunity in this life, will infallibly be punished by everlasting fire in the next.

To have been the cause of a scandal to an innocent little one of the flock of Christ, is a worse evil to the author thereof, than not to have been. Compared with the consequences to be expected from such a crime by the criminal himself, to be drowned in the expanse of the sea, rather than to accomplish his purpose—to be cut off at once in the conception of the crime, before he has time to carry it into effect ; would be better for his eternal, if not for his temporal welfare, than to be allowed to live, and to realize his design.

Such is the meaning of verse 6 in St. Matthew, or

of verse 42 in St. Mark. A choice is proposed between two evils; one, the consequence of an act, as meditated but not yet performed; the other, the consequence of one, as both meditated and performed; each terrible of its kind, but the latter much the worse of the two. It is supposed that the design of giving offence has been formed but not yet completed, and even so is entitled to a very grievous punishment, nothing less than drowning in the depth of the sea; and it is supposed that the same design has not merely been conceived, but executed; and as such is entitled to a still higher degree of punishment, eternal destruction in the fires of hades. The words should be rendered, therefore, in either instance, “Whoso *would offend*” or *scandalize* “one “of these little ones, who believe in” or “trust upon “me, it is good for him that a millstone were hanged “about his neck, and he were drowned in the ex- “panse of the sea” (before he accomplish his purpose—as is evidently implied, or by succeeding in it, become obnoxious to hell fire.)

The causes or motives, such as they must be conceived to actuate to the commission of a crime like this, can be of no venial kind, nor tinged with any of the mere ordinary degrees of moral guilt. In the estimation of actions by the divine judgment, (and by the human, so far as it is capable of emulating the divine,) their moral qualities as good or evil, are referred to the dispositions of the agents. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that a crime, which we find our Saviour himself denouncing beforehand as so heinous in itself, so aggravated in its consequences to all who are concerned in it—to the most innocent, as well as to the most guilty, party in the

transaction—must have its original in some corresponding depravity of the human will; and that too, no common degree of depravity. The motives to such actions, in which the source of their peculiar depravity consists, seem to be described in the intermediate verses, between 7 and 10 of St Matthew, and 42 and 49 of St. Mark. Nor can we in fact account for the transition in either instance, or for the difference of topic before and after verse 7 of St. Matthew and verse 42 of St. Mark respectively, by any supposition, so naturally as by this; that as the former part denounced the malignity and serious consequences of the crime, so does the latter the malignity or moral complexion of its motives.

The several motives, it is true, which are supposed to actuate to the commission of the *offence*, or rather to give the *offence* itself, are represented as the hand, the foot, or the eye. But if these are not literally capable of originating any action, they are not literally capable of actuating an offence. In what sense, then, are they to be considered capable of such effects, and consequently of contracting the moral guilt which is chargeable on the authors or causes of such effects?

In the first sermon on the mount, as we have it recorded by St. Matthew °, (but nowhere else, except in the present instance, and in the discourse just before related by St. Mark,) we find the same language employed, and the same precepts delivered, upon occasion of a doctrine which is evidently restricted to the duty of self-denial, or self-control; the duty of suppressing all evil desires or tendencies

° Matt. v. 27—30. Harm. P. ii. 23.

in limine; the precaution of laying the restraint on the first impulse to sin, as the surest means of guarding against its effects in action. The most general notion which we can form of the hand, the foot, the eye, is that of the natural instruments of action; or of the natural media of conversing with things without. It is true, we have five senses, each provided with its natural organ; but only one of the natural instruments of their operation is here mentioned: which one is the eye, as the natural organ of the sense of sight. The hand and the foot are not the proper instruments of any of the senses, not even of the sense of touch—which is no more restricted to them than to any other part of the body; but they may be said to be the only natural instruments of action with which we are furnished, whether in subordination to the impulses of sense or to any other motive. The eye, then, as one of the organs of sense, and as the greatest and noblest of all, must be considered to represent the rest which belong to the same class of things with itself.

A mere instrument or organ, like the hand or the foot, is incapable of actuating itself; and requires therefore to be actuated originally by something else. But an organ of sense, like the eye, is so formed as to act on the desires, and by that means to communicate an impulse to the will—as well as to receive one from it. All these members of the human body, however, are specified alike as the causes of scandals; and therefore we may presume, all in the same sense, either as equally active or as equally passive. But it cannot be as actively the causes of offence, in the case of the hand and the foot—which are mere passive instruments; there-

fore neither is it in the case of the eye, or any other organ of sense supposed to be included in it.

If all these subjects, however, are considered to be merely instrumental or passive—whatever be the use to which they are applied, even when that use is criminal or sinful, they cannot be responsible for the effect; which neither begins nor terminates with them, but originates in some impulse of the will within, and finds its consummation in some gratification, to which a natural instrument of action, or a natural organ of sense, is subservient, from without. The use of such instruments is purely mediate.

It is possible, notwithstanding, that by a very common metonymy, the instrumental means may stand for the efficient cause of a thing: and where the efficient cause is a moral motive, necessarily lurking and concealed from view, the stated instrument by which it works—the natural medium through which it finds vent—is the first, the readiest, the liveliest, and to the eye of sense, the only method of representing it. The moral quality of the motive, the moral guilt of the effect, must now be transferred *to* the instrument, and must now be charged *upon* the instrument; which like an artificial sign, at first indifferent and arbitrary, has become possessed of a new sense and meaning, yet a very determinate one.

In this way, even the eye, the hand, the foot, may be said to be capable of tempting to sin; as the natural media without which sinful desires, though conceived within, could not take effect externally. The violence, then, which would be necessary to repress those sinful desires, may be said to exert itself in curbing, restraining, and if need be, cutting off and

exterminating these their instruments; it being almost the same thing not to feel a sinful impulse of any kind, and not to have the means of gratifying it. In either case, no sinful act will be the result of any such impulse; though I would not be understood to say that no moral guilt will be contracted by conceiving the impulse, when sinful. But the truth is, that the constant repetition of this violence done to every sinful impulse, has a tendency to obviate their recurrence, besides being certain to prevent their taking effect. They will be the less likely to return, the more constantly they are checked and subdued, when they do.

It would seem, then, that the causes of scandals, that is, the first motives which actuate to them—are such as have their root in the worst passions of human nature; or it would not have been deemed necessary, in the course of a sermon begun on the topic of giving offence, and on the danger of its consequences to both the parties concerned in it—to expatiate upon the expediency of cutting off, and parting with, even the most valuable and indispensable members of the body; its instruments of action, or its organs of sense; rather than by retaining them, to be tempted to the commission of such a crime. We have seen what the consequences of the crime were described to be; how fatal both to the guilty author and to the innocent sufferer. From all this—it is obvious to conclude that such a crime must be no light or venial matter; but the greatest offence which one responsible being can commit against another. Nay—it seems to be represented as a sort of high-treason against God himself. The punishment denounced against the mere meditation, with-

out the perpetration of it, the punishment of being thrown into the sea and drowned—if it has any propriety in being specified here—appears to imply this; for that kind of death was not resorted to anciently, except for state offenders, or for the authors of crimes of a peculiarly atrocious, aggravated, abominable, and in all respects extraordinary description^p.

^p Among the Greeks, sacrilege was punished by drowning; see Diodor. Siculus, xvi. 35. The first person so punished at Rome, was for an act of supposed impiety and profaneness; viz. M. Tullius, or M. Aquilius, in the reign of Tarquinius Superbus, because he had betrayed the secrets of the Sibylline books, committed to his care. For this he was sewn up in a sack, and thrown into the sea. See Valerius Max. i. 1. 13: Dionys. Hal. A. R. iv. 62: Zonaræ Ann. vii. 11. 331. C. Probably because the Christians were considered *ἄθεοι*, impious, profane, godless, in an eminent sense of the term; drowning with weights of lead or with millstones about their necks, was the kind of death to which Christian martyrs were sometimes subjected—See Lactantius De Mortibus Persec. 15: Ruinart, Acta Martyrum 24. Passio S. Symphorosæ, cap. 2. On the same principle, too, might many of the Jews have suffered, who were thus treated in the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, and Antiochus Eupator—2 Macc. xii. 3, 4.

Parricides or matricides in particular, were always so punished at Rome: being sewn up in sacks, with a cock, a dog, an ape, and a viper, and cast into the sea. The first person who underwent this death for the crime in question, among the Romans, according to Florus, (Livii Epitome, lib. xlvi.) was Publicius Malleolus, B. C. 102. for the murder of his mother. Cf. Valerius Max. loc. cit.: Dionys. Hal. loc. cit.: Ciceronis Orat. pro S. Roscio, 25, 26: Seneca, De Ira, i. xvi. 4: De Clementia, xv. 5: xxiii. 1: Juvenal. viii. 213, 214: xiii. 155, 156, &c. In like manner, *spintriæ*, and such as were guilty of unnatural enormities, were punished by drowning: Sueton. Cai. 16, 1—Lampridii Alexander Severus, 34. Monstrous births, or children born with any unnatural deformity, were drowned at Rome: Seneca, De Ira, i. xv. 2.

Now, that a crime of so serious a nature; a crime which must be conceived deliberately, yet begin in some impure motive; a crime which would be fatal to the salvation both of its guilty author, and of its innocent object; a crime which was an high misdemeanour against God himself, and could be adequately resented only by the pains of eternal death; that such a crime was capable of being committed by the apostles, the persons addressed in this present discourse—is a supposition which cannot for a moment be entertained. Nor is there the least intimation either in the warning denounced against its commission, or in the description of its personal consequences, that would fix the allusion to it upon them.

State prisoners were sometimes so executed in Persia: Herod. iii. 30. Augustus punished the *pædagogî* of his grandson Caius Cæsar, and his other confidential attendants, for a breach of their trust, by hanging weights about their necks and drowning them: Suet. Aug. 67, 7. Avidius Cassius in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, made drowning a military punishment: Gallicani Cassius, 4. The poet Sotades was enclosed in a vessel of lead and drowned, for a satire on Ptolemy Philadelphus: Athenæus, xiv. 13. Dio Chrysostom tells us, it was the law at Thasus, to cast into the sea any thing inanimate, that had been the means of a person's death: Oratio xxxi. 618. 5. The Galileans testified their hatred of Herod, by drowning his partisans in the lake of Galilee: Jos. Ant. Jud. xiv. xv. 10. B. i. xvi. 2.

Œdipus Tyrannus, apud Sophoclem, says of himself, as of a monster not fit to be tolerated alive any longer—

. ἕξω μέ που
καλύψατ', ἢ φονεύσατ', ἢ θαλάσσιον
ἐκρίψατ'.

Œdip. Tyr. 1410.

and so does a certain character, in the romance of Charito, who had been guilty of a great crime: Τρόπον ζητήσατε κολάσεως ἀπόρρητον. χείρονα δέδρακα ἱεροσύλων καὶ πατροκτόνων. μὴ θάψητέ με. μὴ μιάνητε τὴν γῆν. ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀσεβὲς καταποντώσατε σῶμα. Lib. i. p. 9. l. 6.

It is not said, Whichever of *you* would scandalize or give offence to one of these little ones; but merely, Whoso would scandalize or give offence to one of these little ones: which supposes, indeed, the possibility of the crime, but leaves it indefinite by whom it should be committed. Further than this—it is even more than implied, it is distinctly asserted, that such offences should be given, and therefore that some there must be to give them. “Woe unto the world, because of offences! for it must needs be that offences should come.” But if to be given at all, they must be to be given hereafter; it cannot be said that they either had been, or could have been given as yet: and by whomsoever they should *then* be committed, there is no reason to suppose from any thing now said or implied, that the authors of them would be the apostles of Christ in particular; though it is clearly insinuated that the objects of them should be one or more of the little ones, who believed in him.

It is observable, however, that the apostles, or hearers of our Lord at the time, who had not been personally addressed as yet, began to be directly alluded to in verse 10, and in what followed thenceforward to verse 14: and a warning began to be personally addressed to them, to beware of something, which may consequently well be supposed a breach of some personal duty incumbent on them more particularly. The object of this warning may possibly be closely connected with the doctrine of giving offence; but it is obvious that it is not a caution to beware of *offending* one of the little ones who believe in Christ; but to beware of *despising* one of them.

The word in the original, which expresses this feeling, (*καταφρονεῖν*), is one which denotes an unconcern or indifference about a thing, founded on a mean opinion of its worth or value. It would describe the motive of our conduct with respect to any thing which, did we possess, we should not think it worth our while to retain, or to be at any pains in retaining; did we happen to be without, we should not think it worth while to gain, or to be at any pains in gaining; did we happen to lose, we should scarcely be inclined to recover, or to take any trouble in recovering.

Against this kind of opinion of the little ones who believed in Christ, and as founded in such a low estimation of their worth, the apostles, or those for whom the apostles may be supposed to stand, do now begin to be personally cautioned beforehand. To the danger, then, of such a contempt for these little ones, as this, they must be considered liable themselves, or they would not themselves be warned against it; and because they are warned against it, and warned in a very solemn manner too, there is no doubt that if they incurred this danger—if they did conceive or entertain any such feeling about the little ones, who believed in Christ, as this—the apostles, or whomsoever the apostles are supposed to represent, would be guilty of a personal breach of duty, which might amount personally to a very great crime.

Now, laying these things together; if, to have given offence to one of these little ones on the one hand, entailed the risk of its being lost for ever; a mean opinion of one of them on the other, would entail the risk of no effort's being made to recover it, before it was lost for ever. The hearers of our

Lord, or those whom these hearers represent, are cautioned against any such opinion concerning these little ones, as would lead to an effect like that; the loss of their salvation, without a feeling of care or concern about it, as a thing of no value—as a matter of pure indifference—in the estimation at least of those, who ought to think very differently of it.

The supposed state of the case, on which all the arguments that follow from this point downwards, are founded, is this: that one of the little ones who believe in Christ, is in imminent danger of perishing, and perishing eternally; who yet may be recovered, retrieved, restored to safety—if a feeling of indifference about the little one himself; if a mean opinion of his intrinsic worth or value—does not prevent the making the attempt. The reason of the danger to its safety, we may justly presume from the connexion and context of both parts of the discourse, are those consequences of having been offended, or of taking offence, about which so much has been already said; and the persons, who are supposed to be bound to attempt to save it from this danger, while there is a possibility of succeeding in that attempt; and who would naturally be induced to do so, if they cared for the little one itself—if they were not indifferent, whether it should be lost or be saved—it is clear are either the apostles, or those whom the apostles represent.

Now this state of the case implies of necessity that the little ones who are in danger of perishing, and those who are bound to save them from that danger, stand in a very close, and a very precise relation to each other. Nor will any relation answer to such a state of the case, but the relation of one who

is committed to the care of another, because he is not able to take care of himself—the relation of one who has to take care of others, because they cannot take care of themselves; the relation, in short, of the guardian and the ward; that is, of one who has another committed to his charge, for whose safety he has become responsible—and that of the subject of his trust.

The relation of the shepherd to his flock is one of the most familiar instances of a relation of this sort. Does the danger of evil from any quarter, menace the flock? It is the duty of the shepherd, if possible, to guard and secure them against it. Has evil of any kind befallen the flock? It is the duty of the shepherd, if possible, to retrieve and recover them from it. But in neither case, is it consistent with his duty, to relax his vigilance in their behalf; to intermit his solicitude on their account—from a mean idea of the value of his charge, or a careless indifference what may become of his sheep. The relation of the spiritual pastor to the spiritual flock; the relation of the ministers of religion to the people; is a relation analogous to this, and imposes on the parties who sustain it, an obligation analogous to this. As the ministers of religion in general—as standing in the stead of those who are supposed to be entrusted with the spiritual welfare of the flock of Christ, it appears to me that the apostles or hearers of our Lord, begin to be now addressed, and are to be considered addressed in what follows.

The arguments in reference to this subject, next subjoined, are consequently reducible to the proof of this one point; the infinite value of one of these little ones, *per se*; as the strongest of motives by

all means to preserve them from whatever may endanger their loss. No conviction can be more opposed to a mean or contemptuous opinion of their worth, than this; and therefore no conviction is more likely to counteract the possible risk to their safety and welfare, from such a mean and contemptuous opinion about them, than this. It follows, as a necessary inference from the establishment of this previous truth, that one who has the charge of so precious a deposit can never esteem it too highly; can never be too solicitous about it; either to retain and preserve it while he has it, or to recover it, if possible, if it has been lost.

The arguments themselves are of so pregnant a nature, that each verse both supplies a distinct reason, and requires a distinct illustration. We will take them in order: "Take heed lest ye despise one of these little ones: for I say unto you, Their angels in heaven are always beholding the face of my Father, which is in heaven." ver. 10.

The angels in heaven, it may be presumed, would not be called the angels of these little ones, except for one of *two* reasons; either because those little ones resemble the angels in purity and innocence, or because the angels are specially interested in the spiritual welfare of such little ones, and specially instrumental to it. On either supposition, the intrinsic value of one of these little ones is a necessary inference—whether the holiness and perfection of angels are in any degree adumbrated by theirs; or the glorious beings who inhabit heaven, and stand night and day in the presence of God, are not ashamed to act as servants in their behalf.

From the latter supposition too, it follows *a for-*

tiori; that those who are placed officially over such little ones on earth; those who stand in so much nearer a relation to them, than the angels; those who resemble them in the possession of a common nature, so much more than the angels; are much more bound to labour, and watch, and minister in their behalf. Nor would the text even on this construction, render any support to the doctrine of guardian angels in particular, that is, of angels individually appointed to each of the heirs of salvation; though it might furnish a strong proof of the doctrine of guardian angels in general; that is, of the peculiar relation of the good and holy beings who inhabit heaven, to the heirs of salvation in common⁹. In this

⁹ The popular belief among the Greeks and Romans, assigned to every man his good and his evil genius both, indiscriminately; to the one of whom they attributed all the good fortune, which happened to them in the course of their lives, and to the other, all the evil. Pindar speaks of the *δαίμων ἕτερος* (Pythia, iii. 62.) of Coronis the mother of Æsculapius: and the story concerning the apparition of his evil genius to Brutus, before the battle of Philippi, is well known. Horace observes, as to the diversity of characters, tastes, and propensities, in the children of the same parents—why one should differ from another so much—

Scit genius, natale comes qui temperat astrum,
Naturæ Deus humanæ, mortalis in unum-
Quemque caput, vultu mutabilis, albus et ater.

Ep. ii. 2. 187.

Acts xii. 15, seems to countenance the notion even of particular guardian angels; a notion very generally entertained among the fathers: see Tertullian, iv. 297. De Anima, 39: Basil, i. 62. A. Hexaëmeron, IIom. v: 220. D. in Ps. xxxiii: 287. C. in Ps. xlvi: 747. B. De vera Virginitate: 1050. D—1051. A. in Isaïæ, x: ii. 79. B.—D. Contra Eunomium, iii. &c. It was a still more general persuasion that nations and countries had each their peculiar tutelary angel.

The

general ministerial relation are they represented by the apostle to the Hebrews, where he speaks of them collectively as *λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα*, and agreeably to their name of angels or *messengers* sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation^r; and no doubt, in a variety of ways at present inscrutable and unintelligible to ourselves, but which may appear more fully hereafter, actually instrumental in furthering the spiritual welfare of mankind. That they are not unconcerned spectators of the good or the evil conduct of men, nor indifferent to the happiness and misery which may be the proper consequence of either; appears from the fact, that “there is joy in heaven “over one sinner that repenteth,” yea, “more joy, “among the angels of God, over one sinner,” who has turned from the error of his way, “than over “ninety and nine just persons,” that never were in danger of being lost^s.

The expression, “are always beholding the face of “my Father,” which describes the employment of these angels in heaven, seems to denote the attitude of servants, who are bound to be in a state of readiness at all times, for receiving and executing the commands of a master. The Psalmist describes this attitude much in the same manner, where he says^t; “Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand

The pastor of Hermas supposes every Christian to have both his good and his evil angel. See Origen, i. 140. g. De Princip. iii. 2. 4. The same pastor quotes St. Matthew and St. Mark, in the present instance, as follows: *Commonete ergo vos invicem, pacalique estote inter vos; ut et ego coram Patre vestro astans, rationem reddam pro vobis Domino.* Lib. i. visio iii. cap. 9. p. 41.

^r Hebrews i. 14.

^s Luke xv. 1—10. Harm. P. iv. 41.

^t Psalm cxxiii. 2.

“ of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto
“ the hand of her mistress ; so our eyes *wait* upon
“ the LORD our God, until that he have mercy
“ upon us.” If we combine with this, the previous
designation of their personal relation, as the angels
of the little ones who believe in Christ, we may
infer from both, that they stand day and night in
the presence of the Father, in their capacity of the
angels of the little ones as well as in that of his
proper instruments, messengers, and ministers. That
is, they are constantly intent on receiving, and con-
stantly employed in executing, the commands of God
in behalf of such peculiar objects of his love and
care, as the little ones who believe in Christ.

“ For the Son of man is come to save that which
“ was lost,” ver. 11. Another argument both of the
intrinsic value of a little one, and of the duty incum-
bent on their spiritual pastors and guardians, to
protect or recover them from all danger to their sal-
vation, is proposed in the example of our Lord him-
self ; who came to seek and to save that which was
lost. The primary design of Christ’s coming was
certainly not in behalf of *one* who was in danger
of perishing, but in behalf of *all*—who must other-
wise have perished and been lost. On the principle,
however, of analogy, the example of Christ in com-
ing to save and recover *all*, merely because they
were otherwise in danger of being lost, is a strong
motive to attempt the salvation and recovery of *one*
or *more*, if likewise in danger of perishing. Christ
himself had effected the one ; as none but Christ
could have effected a salvation on so large a scale
as to include *all*, who were otherwise in danger of
perishing ; the apostles, or ministers of religion,

whom Christ should entrust with the care of his own in his stead, must effect the other; that is, must do for their particular charge, if the case required it, the same thing which he had done for *all*; viz. to seek and to save, that which would otherwise be lost. The danger of *all* mankind, under such circumstances, was but parallel to the danger of *one*; and the care or solicitude of Christ, under the same circumstances, for the recovery and salvation of all mankind, were but parallel to what should be the care and solicitude of any one of *his* ministers, for the recovery and salvation of one or more, of his particular charge. All mankind were lost before the coming of Christ, and one has been lost of the flock of Christ; all mankind might be recovered by the coming of Christ, and the lost one may be recovered by the minister of Christ. Christ came expressly to recover the whole; the faithful pastor who acts in his stead, is bound to recover the part. A just sense of the value of *all* prompted the benevolence of Christ to attempt the recovery of all; a similar conviction of the worth of *one* should stimulate the affectionate pastor, by all means to attempt the recovery of one.

“What think ye? if a man have an hundred
“sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth
“he not, having left the ninety-nine, go to the
“mountains, and seek that which is going astray?”
ver. 12. Nothing can more strikingly illustrate
the natural tendency of the least opinion of the
value of a good possessed, to set the possessor, by all
means, on endeavouring to recover it if it has been
lost—than this simple and familiar instance. Let it
be remembered, however, that in arguing from it as

a parallel case on the point at issue, the contrast lies between the value of *one* human soul, and that of a *single* sheep: things which are by no means commensurate. Hence, if the loss of a single sheep which has strayed from the flock, so sensibly affects the shepherd, that he cannot rest until he has found it again and brought it back—that he will hazard the safety of the rest, in leaving them for a while by themselves, to go and recover that one—how much more should the loss of a little one who believes in Christ, and having inadvertently strayed from his fold, is in danger of perishing for ever, disturb the good Christian pastor, and urge him, on every account, to reclaim the wanderer, and rescue it in time from the danger which threatens its salvation!

“And if it so come to pass that he hath found it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth for it more than for the ninety-nine, which have not gone astray.” ver. 13. The same opinion of the value of a thing, which makes us uneasy at losing it, naturally prompts us to attempt its recovery: and the joy with which the labour of the attempt when successful, is naturally crowned and rewarded, may very fitly be proposed as an encouragement to make the attempt. The former argument insisted on this natural tendency of the sense of uneasiness under the loss of any thing valuable, and dear to us; the present, on the natural consequence of the removal of that uneasiness, by the recovery of what has been lost: and though this consequence may appear to be strongly expressed, yet under the circumstances of the case, it is but a just and consistent description of the effect.

We know from experience, that the acquisition of any good is felt in proportion to its improbability—to the degree of interest we take in it, to the eagerness which we feel to possess it, and the like—as much as to its intrinsic worth. The most acceptable and affecting pieces of good-fortune are those, which are most unexpected and surprising. The recovery of what has been lost, and is given up as hopeless, when suddenly made, will produce a livelier burst of transport on that very account; and will please for the time, to a degree which in the moments of sober reflection, when the first emotion of feeling has died away, we can scarcely account for. We do not always know the true value of what we once enjoyed, until we have experienced what it is to want it; and while a thing seems to be our own for ever, and secure, we are often ungrateful enough not to prize and esteem it, whether we understand it or not, as we ought.

The effect, which is supposed to ensue in the present instance, is no more than in unison with the circumstances that precede it. If the loss of one sheep out of one hundred, so affects the shepherd, that he leaves the ninety-nine for a time, to go in quest of this one—that he ceases to think of the rest, committed to his care as well as this one, and liable to danger in his absence, while employed in pursuit of this one—it is but natural, that if he has succeeded in recovering this one, he should rejoice more over it than over the ninety-nine, which went not astray; that he should make more of the one which he has just regained, than of the many which he never lost; that he should think himself abundantly rewarded by his success, for the pains

and labour of the search ; and abundantly justified by the recovery even of one, for the danger to the safety of many more, incurred in making it^u.

As applied to the question at issue, all this amounts to an argument *a pari*, that the recovery of a little one who believes in Christ, but has gone astray and is in danger of perishing, when attempted from a sense of duty, and with whatever degree of pains and labour to be achieved, cannot fail to give the benevolent mind of the good Christian pastor an exquisite satisfaction, which, independent of the infinite service done to the object of his concern, will be its own reward.

“ Even thus is there not before your Father, “ which is in heaven, a will that one of these little “ ones should perish.” The will and good pleasure of the Father himself are proposed, in the last place, as an argument to the same effect with the preceding considerations, and as containing an independent weight and authority of its own, not less than as summing up and concluding the rest. The will and

^u There is a beautiful instance of the recovery of a lost sheep of the flock of Christ, by the instrumentality of the beloved disciple ; which the classical reader will find in Clemens Alexandrinus, *Quis dives salvetur?* cap. 42. Opera, ii. 958. sqq. : and the English reader in Lardner.

“ He shall feed his flock like a shepherd : he shall gather the “ lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall “ gently lead those that are with young.” Isaiah xl. 11. Cf. Ezek. xxxiv. 4—6. 8. 12.

Te quoque non pudeat, cum serus ovilia vises,
Si qua jacebit ovis partu resoluta recenti,
Hanc humeris portare tuis, natosque tepenti
Ferre sinu tremulos, et nondum stare paratos.

Calpurnius, *Ecloga* V. 39.

good pleasure of God are, or ought to be, decisive upon every point, on which they are expressed. It is not consistent with that good-will, or rather it is directly contrary to it, that any, even the least of the flock of Christ, should perish; at least for want of that due care and vigilance, which should be exerted by the proper persons in their behalf. That the effect of this good-will is still conditional, that it is exercised subject to the qualification just mentioned, must be evident: otherwise, if the Father willed the perishing of none of the little ones who believe in his Son, and that will alone were sufficient, none would perish, nor be in danger of perishing: which is contrary to every thing that has yet been supposed.

The truth is, the good pleasure of the Father that no such little one should perish, is proposed as an argument not that none of them *can* perish, but *why* none of them should carelessly be left to perish. It is a reason, and the strongest of all reasons, why the good minister of religion, who has the charge of these little ones, should look the more vigilantly to his trust, lest he incur by neglect or supineness, the high guilt of a direct misdemeanor against God; the presumption of acting in contempt of *his* declared will and pleasure. They whose spiritual welfare is committed by God to the hands of others, are not committed that any should perish, but that all, if possible, should be saved. Their pastors are responsible for them: at *their* hands will the loss be required, if any are lost who might have been saved. All may not be ultimately preserved; but none must be suffered to perish through mere indifference and mere unconcern about him, whom the ordinary, or

even the extraordinary pains and diligence of his spiritual guardian, had they been duly exerted in his behalf, would have rescued from perdition. In this sense is there “no will before the Father” of Christians, that any of his children should perish—and woe to the careless or treacherous among those who have the charge of them upon earth, if through their fault any such evil befall them. One of the flock will have been lost; but a terrible account for the loss will be exacted from the shepherd.

An opinion there is, sanctioned by names of great authority, that under this danger to the safety of the little ones who believed in him, from taking offence, our Saviour intended the danger to be apprehended from persecution; and therefore by the causes or authors of scandals or offences, the causes or authors of persecutions. I think it proper to mention this opinion; but I am sure that enough and more than enough, has been said to shew its absurdity, and to refute it. The risk from which good Christian ministers in particular, are bound to screen or save their flocks, both before it occurs to them and after, can be no danger to be apprehended from mere persecution; a danger to which the minister himself is as liable as any of his flock, and from which no vigilance or precautions of the pastor can secure the sheep beforehand; nor except where the violence of persecution has caused a particular convert to lapse and renounce his faith, can retrieve his flock afterwards. It is unnecessary, however, to reckon up all the objections to this opinion. The proper duty of a Christian pastor must be concerned in the recovery of one of his flock, from the possible consequences of taking offence: and that proper

duty must be something connected with the purity of Christian practice, or with the soundness of Christian belief, or with both. The scandals or offences in question must, therefore, be something which has a tendency to impair either of these things, or both; and the authors of such offences must be persons through whom the injury is done, or in danger of being done to them.

The proper meaning of the word *scandal*, (*σκάνδαλον*,) is that of an *obstacle*, *let*, or *impediment*, which lies, or may lie, in a person's way: against which if the foot impinge unawares, not only is the motion of the body obstructed, but the body is in danger of being thrown down. It is used also in classical writers, to denote a snare or trap, or rather a part of a snare or trap—the tongue or wire which sustains the bait—which connects the trap with the snare or bait^x. But in the New Testament it never occurs, except in a metaphorical sense; and that a sense founded upon its primary meaning, in the first of the two senses just mentioned.

To consider all the instances of the occurrence of the substantive itself, or of the verb derived from it, in the New Testament, would take up too much time. The following may be stated as the most general and summary conclusion to which such a review would lead: that in questions of a religious or practical kind, whatever has a tendency either to obstruct the reception of a saving faith, or to endanger its continuance when received—whatever would dissolve the unity of Christian love—corrupt the integrity of Christian doctrine—pervert the

^x The more common form of the word in this sense however, is *σκανδάληθρον*.

rectitude of Christian practice—and on all such accounts endanger the salvation of those affected thereby; may be, and is, denominated a *scandal* or obstacle, placed in their way, over which by happening upon it, they may stumble and fall. Whosoever therefore is the cause of any of these things—and unto whomsoever—whatever be the consequences of the taking offence, he is the author of such an offence, and the cause of such consequences, to those who are so affected by it. And it is further demonstrable from the language and testimony of scripture, that no man can be the author of scandals in this sense, and with this effect resulting from them, except from some impure, some selfish and wicked motive, which constitutes him a deliberate offender, as well as one of the worst class.

In the exposition of the parable of the tares, scandals were classed with the workers of iniquity in general^y. “He who loveth his brother,” according to St. John^z, “abideth in the light, and scandal in him there is none. But he who hateth his brother, is in the dark, and walketh in the dark, and knoweth not where he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes:”—so that for a man to have no *scandal* in him is to have no darkness; and reversely, to have darkness, is to have a scandal in him; is to have that which will infallibly cause him to fall. A scandal then, and darkness as opposed to light, (darkness and light, both as ruling, though contrary principles of conduct, the one implying falsehood, guile, self-delusion, the other sincerity, innocence, and an enlightened understanding,) seem almost convertible terms.

^y Matt. xiii. 41.

^z 1 Ep. ii. 10, 11.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which it appears from the context, consisted in preaching liberty to eat of meats sacrificed to idols, and in permitting the impurities of promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, is called in Revelation the scandal or stumblingblock, which Balaam set before the children of Israel^y.

In St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, he concludes his enumeration of practical duties, with the following caution. "But I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions (*schisms*) and offences (*scandals*) contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and turn away from them^z." He classes, therefore, the authors of scandals with the authors of divisions, as implying the same or nearly the same thing; and stigmatizes both as equally opposed to the sound doctrine which the Romans had been already taught. Such authors of scandals he bids them avoid; assigning two reasons for this caution: one, the impurity of their motives—"For such *as they* serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly:" and the other, the danger to the unsuspecting and unwary, to be apprehended from their artifices—"And by their good speaking and fair speaking they deceive the hearts of the simple^a." These two phrases are explanatory of each other, and both imply much the same thing, a fair, a specious, a plausible address; a show of godliness without the reality—which under the semblance of goodness, truth, religious zeal, was made instrumental to purposes of cunning, sensuality, imposture. Our Saviour had described the religious hypocrites of his own day in similar language, as

^y Rev. ii. 14, 15.

^z Rom. xvi. 17.

^a Rom. xvi. 18.

“ eating up the houses of widows, and on purpose making long prayers^b.” The Judaizing teachers in particular, the first authors of schisms, dissensions, and heresies in the Christian churches, were probably intended by the apostle in the above passage; though it might apply also to others.

With this description we may compare others, in his several Epistles, apparently intended of the same persons in general, or of such as nearly resembled them. Thus Philipp. iii. 2: “ Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workmen, beware of the cision.” And again, iii. 18: “ For many walk, of whom I said to you often, and I now say even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ, the end of whom *is* perdition, the god of whom *is* their belly, and the glory of whom *is* in their shame, who think the things of earth.” Again, Coloss. ii. 8: “ Beware lest there shall be any one, that by means of philosophy and vain deception, maketh a spoil of you after the tradition of men, after the principles (*elements*) of the world, and not after Christ.” And, ii. 16: “ Let no one therefore judge you in eating, or in drinking, or in the instance of a feast, or a new moon, or days of rest.” And, ii. 18: “ Let no one play the part of an umpire over you, *however* desirous, in abasement of mind and angels’ worship, intruding into things which he hath not seen, at random puffed up by his mind of flesh.” And again, 21—23: “ Handle not *thou*; neither taste *thou*; nor touch *thou*; (which all, *in* the abuse, *are* to destruction;) after the commandments and teachings of men. Which things have

^b Mark xii. 40. Luke xx. 47. Harm. P. iv. 74.

“ indeed a regard for wisdom in a will worship, (*a would be worship,*) and an abasement of mind, and not sparing of the body, *but* not in any value (*they are of*) for satisfying of flesh.”

Again, in his first to Timothy vi. 3—5: “ If any man teacheth otherwise, and approacheth not to sound words, the *words* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the teaching according to godliness, he is swollen with pride, knowing nothing, but being distempered concerning questions and contests of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, contumelious speakings, evil suspicions, the perverse occupations of men who are corrupted in understanding, and deprived of the truth, who think that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw thou thyself.”

Again, in his second to Timothy, ii. 16—18: “ But shun thou profane babblings; for they will advance to more ungodliness, and their word will eat its way like a cancer: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus, who have erred concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already come to pass, and do overthrow the faith of some.”

Again, in the third chapter of the same epistle, after describing at full length the kind of men who should arise in the last times, he proceeds to sum up all by adding, in verse 5: “ With a semblance of godliness in form, but having denied the power thereof:” after which, shewing that such persons were even then to be found, he subjoins, 5, 6—9: “ And from these turn away. For of these are they which get into families, and make captives of weak women, heaped up with sins, impelled with divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to a

“ knowledge of truth. And as Jannes and Jambres
 “ withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the
 “ truth ; men, utterly corrupt in their understand-
 “ ing, concerning the faith without the power of
 “ discernment. But they shall not advance to more
 “ *lengths* : for their folly shall be palpable to all, as
 “ that of those *men* also became.” Cf. verse 13 :
 also iv. 3, 4.

In like manner, in the epistle to Titus, written
 about the same time as the first to Timothy ; i. 10,
 11 : “ For there are many and unruly, vain talkers
 “ and mind deceivers, specially they of the circum-
 “ cision ; whose mouths must be stopped, who over-
 “ throw whole houses, teaching things which they
 “ ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” Of which per-
 sons, he says moreover *in fine* ; 15, 16 : “ Unto the
 “ clean indeed all things are clean : but unto the
 “ polluted and unbelieving nothing is clean ; but of
 “ them even the understanding and the conscience
 “ is polluted. God they profess to know, but in
 “ *their* works they deny, being abominable and dis-
 “ obedient, and for any good work reprobate.”

Of the same, or of similar false teachers we may
 suppose St. Peter also to speak in his second epistle,
 ii. 1 : “ But there were false prophets also among
 “ the people, as there shall be false teachers among
 “ you likewise, who shall bring in for perverse pur-
 “ poses heresies of perdition,” &c. whose characters,
 attributes, principles and practices, he proceeds to
 describe in the strongest and most significant lan-
 guage, especially from verse 10 to the end. Cf. also
 Jude 4—19. In like manner, St. John, too, speaks
 of the false teachers in his time ; and as so far the
 precursors of Antichrist : see his first General Epi-

stle, ii. 18—23 : and iv. 1—6. Cf. his second Epistle, 7—11 : and his third, 9, 10.

Of such false teachers in general ; of those who were more especially liable to be led away by them ; of the authors of what St. Peter denominates the (*αἵρέσεις τῆς ἀπωλείας*) “heresies of perdition”—with which the Christian Church was early disturbed, its unity violated ; its purity infected ; its orthodoxy perverted—of the duty incumbent on the advocates and champions of the truth ; the teachers of sound doctrine, the pious and sincere ministers of religion—to oppose such persons, and to protect, or recover from their delusions those who on such and such moral accounts, were the least worthy and yet the most likely, among the members of the Christian community, to become their victims ; in a word, of the damnable nature of the sin of heresy to all the parties affected by it, and of the impure, malignant, and depraved motives which must actuate the authors of such a sin, to become guilty of it ; I am of opinion that the whole of our Saviour’s discourse on the subject of giving offence to any of the little ones, who believed in Christ—was designed from the first to be understood.

It may not be amiss to pause a moment, in order to confirm this conclusion by the testimony of one or two of the most ancient ecclesiastical writers ; in whose apprehensions it will appear that the word scandal had no other meaning than what we are here contending for ; and that too, a construction of its meaning founded entirely on the authority of the present passage.

“Remember the words of Jesus our Lord,” says Clement of Rome in his first epistle to the Corin-

thians^c, “ for he said, woe unto that man, better it
 “ were for him not to have been born, than to have
 “ offended one of mine elect. Better it were for
 “ him to have had a millstone put about *him*, and
 “ to have been drowned in the sea, than to have
 “ offended one of my little ones. Your schism hath
 “ perverted many, many hath it cast into despon-
 “ dency, many into doubting, all of us into grief.
 “ Yet your dissension is abiding still.”

Polycarp in his epistle to the church of Philippi^d, recommends his hearers to be “ zealous for
 “ that which is honest, keeping themselves from
 “ scandals, and false brethren, and those who bear
 “ the name of Jesus in hypocrisy, who lead astray
 “ foolish men.”

Dionysius too, bishop of Corinth, and almost con-
 temporary with the other two fathers, has a passage
 in one of his epistles, which seems to require to be
 understood of the *woe* denounced by our Lord
 against the authors of scandals: and if so, proves
 that he took such to be the authors of any kind of
 falsehood, or corruption of truth and honesty. “ For
 “ the brethren having requested me to write letters,
 “ I wrote *them*. And these the apostles of the
 “ Devil have filled with tares, taking away some
 “ things, and adding others: for whom the woe is
 “ written^e.”

Now heresy, in the original sense of the word,
 meant something different from what we understand
 by it at present. An heretic is but little distinguished
 from a schismatic, in our construction of the word;

^c Ch. i. 46. Cf. Ep. ii. 10.

^d Cap. 6. PP. Apost. 1010. A.

^e Euseb. E. H. iv. 23. 145. C.

but anciently he was not so confounded. St. Paul writing to the Galatians, and enumerating the works of the flesh, discriminates διχοστασίας, which means *divisions* or *schisms*, from αίρέσεις, which means *heresies*^f; and therefore implies that they were not the same thing. And in a still more remarkable instance, when addressing the Corinthians he tells them he had been informed that there were schisms or divisions among them, (σχίσματα,) which shewed themselves when they met together for the celebration of the eucharist, or any other act of common worship; and he adds that he was partly inclined to believe the report. But why? Because, he proceeds, there must be even heresies among them, that they who were sound and approved might become manifest^g. In the opinion of St. Paul, therefore, schism was one thing and heresy was another; schism was a bad thing, but heresy was a worse; there might be schisms which did not amount to heresies, but there could not be heresies which did not imply schisms, and something besides.

In the modern sense of the word too, a man may be an heretic, that is, *heterodox* in his opinions on such and such points, and yet be more to be pitied than condemned. But heresy in ancient times implied more than an error of judgment, or a mere defect of intellectual ability; it involved a depravity of the will. Nay more, it implied the possession of even superior intellectual ability, unaccompanied however by the proper moral qualifications to make it always be wisely and innocently exerted. An heretic as such could have thought right, if he had not chosen to think wrong; an heretic therefore

^f Gal. v. 20.

^g 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.

might err, but he must err deliberately; the fault, if he erred, was not in his understanding, but in his temper and disposition. It is a well-known dictum of Augustin's, ("errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo,") "I may be in error, I would not be an heretic:" which shews, that in his opinion it was possible to be mistaken without intending it, to think or maintain something contrary to sound doctrine from an error of judgment, not from a badness of intention; but not so to be an heretic. An heretic must do the same thing, but he must do it deliberately. St. Paul's instruction to Titus concerning the treatment of an heretic, or rather of a man *disposed to heresy*, is to this effect; "A man heretically inclined after one admonition, and a second, leave to himself, knowing that such an one is turned away, and sinneth, being condemned of his own self^h." The conscience of such an one, then, stood self-convicted of the crime in question; notwithstanding which, the criminal persisted in it. And in like manner, specifying by name certain heresiarchs of his own time, he tells us that they had rejected from themselves, or put off, *a good conscience* first, and made shipwreck of the *faith* afterwardsⁱ.

The truth is that in the proper and classical sense of the word, *αἵρεσις*, or heresy, means simply a sect or party; a choice or predilection of one thing above another, whether it be of persons or of opinions, or of both. "Heresy is so called in Greek from choosing; that is, because every one chooses for himself that which appears to him better *than*

^h Titus iii. 10, 11. ⁱ 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

“ *another*. The Stoic, the Peripatetic, the Academic, the Epicurean philosophers also are styled by the name of this or that heresy. It is superfluous to go through one instance after another, and to enumerate Marcion, Valentinus, Apelles, Ebion, Montanus, Manes, with their proper tenets ; it being very easy for every one to learn by what errors they are each of them led^k.” Nor had the Greeks alone their several schools or systems of philosophy, called *heresies* in common ; but the Jews also, from a certain time after the return from captivity, had the same in their Pharisees, their Sadducees, their Essenes, their Zealots : all which Josephus calls so many *αἵρέσεις*, *elections*, *choices*, or *parties*. It is needless to add that the word is applied to them by the writers of the New Testament in the same sense ; and in fact is never used there, except in its proper and classical meaning.

To be the author of an heresy is, therefore, primarily to become the founder of a sect or party ; the idea of which, without the supposition of followers and partisans, is absurd. There can be no system or discipline of any kind, whether civil, religious, or moral, but that, if it affords room for difference of opinion on speculative points, or difference of usage on practical ones, it will afford scope for some heresy or other, in this sense. Christianity is a religious and moral system, distinguished by peculiar articles of faith, and peculiar rules of life and conversation, as well as by a peculiar discipline ; from any or all of which dissenters may be found. There could be but one heresy or sect of Christian doc-

^k Hieron. iv. pars i. 438. *ad calc.* in Ep. ad Tit. iii.

trine, Christian morality, or Christian polity, which was legitimate, sound, and just, viz. that of Christ himself and of his apostles, concerning whom Clemens Alexandrinus observes, that neither their written, nor their unwritten teaching differed from itself, or from the truth—"For like as the teaching, so "also the tradition, of all the apostles hath been one¹." But when human passions came to mix themselves up with the profession of Christianity, a variety of sordid and selfish, of impure and sensual, of envious and malignant motives, began to find their account in innovating, corrupting, and perverting both its faith and discipline, both its doctrine and practice, in a thousand ways. All these heresies as such, originating in some criminal purpose of the heresiarch himself, as they were conceived in wickedness, would proceed by fraud; and as they were most likely to find their supporters among the simple and credulous, the unsuspecting and unwary, the weak in judgment and the defective in knowledge—so they would most naturally seek for them there.

"It must needs be," said our Lord on the present occasion, "that offences should come:" and he repeated the assertion more strongly, if possible, on a later occasion: (*ἀνένδεκτόν ἐστι μὴ ἐλθεῖν τὰ σκάνδαλα*^m;) "It "is impossible, it cannot otherwise happen, but that "offences come." St. Paul too, as we have seen, says much the same thing, when he tells the Corinthians that there must be not schisms only, but heresies also, among them. Now, whatever be the cause of this necessity—the early history of Christianity,

¹ Strom. vii. 17. Operr. ii. 900. 8.

^m Luke xvii. 1. Harm. P. iv. 44.

the evidence of ecclesiastical history at all subsequent periods, the state of the Christian world at this present day, only too lamentably attest its reality, and bear witness to the fact of its consequences. Can we resolve this necessity into a fatality, and account for it by concluding that some men are born to be the sources of scandals or offences to the rest of mankind, whether they will or not? Or is it more just and probable to say, that taking human nature all in all, it is but a moral, and not a physical necessity, which rendered it at first, and renders it still impossible, but that offences come? And what moral cause, sufficiently constant and general, can we assign to explain an effect so uniform and universal, but the innate depravity of the human heart? which, while human nature remains at all times and every where the same, will continue to shew itself at all times and every where in the same kind of practical results. To take St. John's classification of impure desires in general; "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride and vainglory of lifeⁿ," have been the prolific parents of *scandals*, of schisms and heresies in every shape, and at every period of the history of the church, as well as of all other irreligious and immoral effects, exemplified in the opinions and conduct of mankind.

Ignatius in his epistle to the Ephesians, writes thus: "Now Onesimus himself praises above measure your orderly subjection *which is* in God, that ye live all according to truth, and that in you no heresy dwelleth; but that ye do not even listen to any one, further than as he speaketh in truth

ⁿ 1 Ep. ii. 16.

“ the things concerning Jesus Christ^o.” And again, in his Epistle to the church of Tralles; “ I beseech you therefore, *and* not I, but the love of Jesus Christ, to make use of the Christian nourishment alone, but from any strange herb, which is heresy, to abstain^p.”

Cyprian says of the Devil, “ He is the inventor of heresies and schisms, to subvert the faith, to corrupt the truth, to rend the unity” (of the church.) *Hæreses invenit et schismata, quibus subverteret fidem, veritatem corrumperet, scinderet unitatem*^q. Again he says: “ Hence it is that heresies both frequently have taken place, and are still taking place, while the mind is too perverse for the possession of peace, and dissent too faithless for the maintenance of unity. These things however the Lord permits and suffers to take place, without disturbing the exercise of each individual’s free will, that while the distinction of truth *from falsehood* proves our hearts and minds, the unpaired faith of the approved may become too bright to be mistaken^r.” And again: “ He” (*the heresiarch*) “ carries arms against the church, he fights against the ordinance of God. An enemy of the altar, a rebel against the sacrifice of Christ, instead of loyal, a traitor, instead of religious, sacrilegious, a disobedient servant, an undutiful son, an unfriendly brother, the bishops despised, and the priests of God utterly abandoned, he presumes to plant another altar . . . nor does he condescend to know, that whoso strives against the appointment

^o Cap. 6. PP. Ap. 855. B.

^p Cap. 6. 864. A. B. Cf. cap. 11.

^q De Unitate Ecclesiae, 105.

^r Ibid 111.

“ of God, for his rashness and presumption is punished by the divine judgment^s.”

“ Look at our heretics,” says Jerome, “ how, when once they despair of salvation, they give themselves up to gluttony and delicate living: how they feed on meat; repeatedly visit the warm bath; smell of perfumes; and besmeared with all kinds of ointments, study the beauty of their persons^t.”

Basil ascribes the motives of heresiarchs and false teachers, sometimes to ignorance and incapacity, but most commonly to the love of power, to vainglory, and the like^u. Clement of Alexandria enumerates among the most fertile causes of heresies, sensual inclinations; self-love and vanity; the affectation of superior learning, the parade of superior ability; the desire of power, influence, preeminence; impatience of superiors and of submission to constituted authorities; the love of victory in dispute; as well as indolence, ignorance, an indisposition to learn, or an incapacity for it^x. And to his testimony we may add that of Tertullian, *De Præscriptionibus Hæreticorum*.

The same emblem of the little child, which stood for the various modifications of the Christian character before considered, stands here as the object of scandal; that is, as the representative of the class of Christians who were most liable to the danger of taking offence, or most exposed to the artifices of those by whom this danger should be brought on the church. It is reasonable to suppose, that such qualities of the infantine character, as rendered it

^s *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*, 116.

^t *Opera*, iii. 638. *ad calc.* in *Jerem.* xxiii.

^u *Opera*, i. 971. C. in *Esaiam* v.

^x *Strom.* vii. 16, 17.

fit to be the type of the regenerate Christian in the former instance, adapted it to represent the same kind of persons in the present ; that is, that the persons peculiarly liable to the risk of taking offence, were, and must be, the *babes* in Christ ; the little ones more particularly, who believed in him.

The natural simplicity and innocence of children render them very amiable and engaging in a moral point of view, but make them easy to be deceived and imposed upon ; nor do their feebleness, and their inability to take care of themselves, require more constantly the support and protection, than do their ignorance and inexperience, the direction and superintendence, of parents or guardians. The majority of good Christians at all times may be persons of this description ; and the majority of good Christians at first, we may very well suppose, actually were so ; persons, whose hearts are better than their understandings, who with the best intentions, the most sincere desire—to go right, may still, unless they are carefully taught and instructed, very easily go wrong—unless they are vigilantly guarded, may be seduced and led astray. These are they who, as having either no opportunity, or no capacity, to learn for and to teach themselves, must be taught and instructed by others ; and not being able to think deeply, or to judge exactly themselves, must receive what they are taught, implicitly. These are they who, as if blind or weak of sight, must see by the light of other eyes than their own—as naturally lame, or accidentally disabled from walking, must lean on other supports, and walk by other steps than their own.

The appointment of a standing Christian min-

istry, as the preservers and dispensers of the word of truth, was more especially for the benefit of such as these; who like children hanging upon their mother's breasts, derive their spiritual nourishment and strength from the pure milk of the word, distilled through the lips of spiritual fathers and pastors. These are they, against whom the artifices of an enemy of truth and goodness—of the designing, insidious, and crafty man of the world—are most likely to be directed; the (*νήπιοι*) *babes*, and not the (*ἄνδρες*) *men*, in Christ; the “tossed on billows, and “carried about with every wind of teaching, by the “juggling of men in cunning and recklessness, according to the course and proceeding of the methods “of deceiving^y,” because they *are* babes and not men. These are consequently they, for whom the prospective care and vigilance of the good shepherd of the flock requires to be constantly exerted, lest they should unfortunately be led astray, and be in danger of perishing; they, whom when they have wandered from his fold, God pities rather than reprobates; and whose recovery, while recovery is possible, it is most agreeable to his benevolence, and most worthy of the office, relation, and character of the Christian minister, by all means to attempt.

From the fifteenth to the twentieth verse of the chapter, we meet with no more allusions to the topic of giving offence; nor with any further mention of the little ones, that believe in Christ. Some change, then, ensued at this point of time in the matter, though there was no interruption in the continuity, of the discourse. Nor is it difficult to perceive what

^y Ephes. v. 14.

the nature of this change was ; in other words, what were the subjects which now began to be discussed. The three first verses (15—17), relate to the resentment of injuries, and the methods of procuring their redress ; the next (18), to the validity of spiritual censures, when lawfully inflicted ; the two last (19, 20), to the efficacy of common prayer, and the presence of Christ with his church, under particular circumstances.

Though the connexion of these new topics with the subjects hitherto discussed, were not to be explained on any of the common principles which regulate the order and succession of ideas, yet the connexion itself would appear to be something regular. Luke xvii. 1—4. ^z discoursing on the same subject of giving offence to the same kind of objects, the little ones who believe in him, our Lord passed on there also, to the topic of the forgiveness of injuries, which begins to be introduced here. We may account, however, for the connexion in each of these instances, to a certain extent, by the relation subsisting between special applications and a general case. The doctrine of giving offences, as a species of injuries, affecting one class of believers in Christ, might suggest the doctrine of the treatment of injuries in general, affecting believers in general. The doctrine of this treatment, including the reparation and redress of injuries, involved the jurisdiction and exercise of spiritual censures ; and spiritual censures, as solemn acts administered by a competent authority, with the sanction and concurrence of the congregation or church, might suggest the doc-

^z Harm. P. iv. 44.

trine of the efficacy of *common* prayer—and through that, of the presence of Christ with his church, and under the proper circumstances, of his cooperation in all its public acts.

To proceed to the first of these topics, the resentment of injuries, and the means of obtaining their redress. The specific instances of such injuries are not defined; but we may collect from certain intimations about them which the text supplies, that they are not injuries of every kind, but of a peculiar description, to the resentment of which, and to the reparation of which, the ensuing discourse relates.

For first; they are such injuries as one *brother* is supposed to commit against another; that is, such as pass between fellow believers, or fellow Christians. If the word *brother* is not used here in its natural sense, it is in its metaphorical; and if it is so used, it denotes the spiritual relationship supposed to exist among the members of the same religious community, considered as making up one family, of which God or Christ is the common parent, while its members, by virtue of their relation to this head, are, or ought to be, linked together in the same bonds of endearment as connect the children of common parents. In this sense, the word *brother* is not peculiar to the language of the New Testament, nor does it occur for the first time in the gospels here. Yet it occurs no where else so clearly in the sense of a fellow Christian, as here.

It follows, therefore, that these injuries are not such as a believer was liable to from an unbeliever, whether in the ordinary intercourse of society, without any regard to his faith and profession—or under special circumstances, on account of his faith

and profession themselves. All the injuries which an unbelieving Jew, or Gentile, was capable of doing to a believing one, are excluded both from the scope of the present definition of the wrongs done, and from that of the precepts, which specify the modes of seeking their redress.

Nor is this distinction an unimportant one, especially in the case of such injuries as amount to persecution, properly so called. With regard to the resentment of *these* injuries, we know from other injunctions of scripture, that there was but one line of conduct to be pursued. Whatever were the kind or degree of injustice, which a Christian as such might receive from an unbeliever, merely for righteousness' sake, the duty of passive submission was clear and peremptory. Charity had no legitimate means of self-defence from such wrongs, but absolute resignation to the evil; absolute forbearance from resentment. It might not even wish for redress, except in deference to the good pleasure of God, who thought fit to try its faith and patience by this kind of discipline, however hard and painful; and it certainly might not seek it by any means but those of prayer and supplication, that God would at length interfere in behalf of his own, and take the redress of those wrongs into his own hands, which he forbade his servants to resent for themselves.

It would be very inconsistent with this doctrine, did we suppose our Saviour to have had such wrongs as these in view, when he was laying down the rules to be observed in the manner of resenting injuries and procuring their redress. Besides which, the idea of obtaining satisfaction for such injuries, by the instrumentality of the injurers themselves, (violence

and compulsion being, by the nature of the case, excluded,) would be absurd.

Again, they are such injuries, as though passing between one brother and another, leave it not doubtful that a wrong has been done, and a wrong has been received, for which all the blame lies on one side. The right of the injured party to the reparation of his wrong, is clear; the obligation of the injurious party to make it, if required of him, is also clear.

Again, they are such injuries, as have passed in secret; that is, until made public by the complaint of the injured party, they are known only to the injurer and himself. Were it not so, it would not be necessary for the sufferer to call in *witnesses* in his own behalf; nor to appeal at last to the *church* itself. They are injuries, therefore, which the injurious party for a time is at liberty to atone for, with as little publicity as they were committed with; and that, if not of his own accord, yet as soon as called upon to do so.

Again, they are such as though wrongfully committed by one of the parties, and known to be so, have never yet been atoned for on his part; of which the sufferer himself is the first to complain, and the first to require redress, clearly because neither the acknowledgment of his fault, nor any offer to repair it, has yet been voluntarily made, or is likely to be made, by the aggressor.

Again, they are such as render it as much for the good of the injurer, as of the injured party, that they be redressed, or in some manner or other made up. "If he attend to thee," says our Saviour, "thou hast gained thy brother." The idea of *gaining* supposes, in strictness, the acquisition of something

not before possessed: but it may also apply to the recovery of what has been lost, to the saving of what is in danger, and properly in imminent danger, of being lost. It is manifest that this last is its sense in the present instance. A brother as such can never be altogether a stranger to a brother, before he has wronged him; and therefore the acquisition of a brother, by his reparation of the wrong he has done, cannot be the acquisition of a *new* thing absolutely, a thing never before possessed. But one brother who has wronged another, may, under certain circumstances, be in danger of losing thereby the relation of a brother; which the reparation of the wrong, can he be persuaded to make it, will have the effect of securing from being lost, and therefore may be said to *gain*.

Now, what would be implied in losing the relation and character of a brother, as a consequence of persisting in the maintenance of an injury, will clearly appear from the sequel; where the matter is brought to this extremity. This being the case, it is not too much to understand by the expression, "Thou hast gained thy brother," not merely, "Thou hast made a *friend* of thy brother; Thou hast regained his good-will and attachment;" nor yet, even, "Thou hast reformed thy brother; Thou hast brought him to a sense of his duty; Thou hast made him a better man than before:" but rather, "Thou hast *saved* thy brother; saved him in a spiritual sense; saved him from the effects of de-
"liberate, unrepented sin, which might have been
"fatal to his salvation." It is doubtless then, as much for his own good, as for that of the offended party, that he be brought to acknowledge his fault,

and made willing at least to repair it. Nor could his offence itself (to endanger the risk of so serious a thing as his own salvation) be of a light and trivial, much less of a fortuitous and unintentional kind. It must have been deliberately committed, and have entailed a moral guilt on the doer: it must have done no slight evil to the sufferer, as well as made a criminal of the aggressor.

Lastly, they are such as offend in an eminent degree, against the union, harmony, and brotherly kindness of a Christian society as such; and though committed directly against one of its members, are indirectly a scandal to the whole body, and injurious to the profession of Christianity. They are such as, when brought under the cognizance of the church, justify even *its* interposition, to procure redress in behalf of the sufferer, or in default of that, to inflict spiritual penalties on the impenitent and refractory party.

On all these accounts, it follows that the resentment of such injuries in general, is no breach of the duty of Christian forbearance and Christian forgivingness, either in the principle which suggests it, (the good of the injurious party, as much as of the injured one,) or in the mode by which (as the sequel proceeds to shew) it seeks the redress.

The right to redress, and the lawfulness of asserting that right under the circumstances of the case, being previously admitted, the next question concerns the fittest and mildest mode of asserting the right. And what expedients more gentle, more delicate, more considerate, more worthy of Christian charity, however much provoked; or unless defeated by unchristian obstinacy and implacability, more likely to succeed—could have been suggested

for this purpose, than those which the text recommends? They have all the same purpose in view; and they may all be attended by the desired effect, the reparation of his own deed by the act of the doer himself. But the two last are proposed as alternatives merely, necessary only in case of the failure of the first; and therefore, though there is an equal charitableness of intention in them all, there is most of friendliness, delicacy, cordiality, in the first, which trying only the method of simple expostulation, and of expostulation too, without witnesses, in private, leaves it optional to the offender to make the desired reparation with the least exposure, the least violence to his feelings, the greatest appearance of being actuated to it by his own sense of duty and love of justice.

If there is more of publicity in the expedient next enjoined, it is because the failure of gentler measures naturally leads to more severe; and the denial of redress, when justly claimed and acknowledged to be due, is itself a reason why the claim should not be abandoned, but if possible, more strongly asserted. Still there is no more of exposure even in this instance, than ought to be charged on the pertinacity of the offender; who has not permitted the matter to rest at the first stage of the process. If the indulgent, considerate, and amicable expedient which Christian charity originally suggested, of a personal expostulation with the author of the offence in private, has not succeeded—is the right to redress less positive than before? is the lawfulness of seeking it impaired by the refusal to make it? is it less consistent with the spirit of charity to carry on a suit, if the necessity of the case requires it, than to

begin one? Nay, may not even the obstinacy of the party, which makes him deaf to mild and friendly remonstrances, be itself an argument with Christian benevolence to persevere in the attempt to reclaim him—to bring him to a sense of his duty even against his will—to conquer his obduracy and soften his hardness—to break into the temper of the gospel so proud and refractory, so rebellious and indomitable a spirit, which will not allow him to acknowledge a fault; which cannot bear the thought of submission; which is ashamed of the idea of reparation, and prefers to maintain an injury, at all hazards, to undoing it, and confessing thereby that it has been in the wrong?

If the expostulation, however, which failed of effect in the presence of two, is to be renewed, reason is, that it should be in the presence of more; whose authority, perhaps, would enforce that impression, which deference to the complaint of an injured party, and regard to right or decency, when appealed to in private, had not succeeded in producing. “By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every fact be established,” was a principle of Jewish law; and it is evidently referred to here, where the injured party is directed to take with him one or two more, to be present at his next interview with the injurer. It might be, that their presence would have the desired effect; but if not, their testimony would still be available at the next stage of the process, in supporting the complaint of the injured person, and in proving the obstinacy of the offender, before another and an higher tribunal.

The failure of this experiment also, by demonstrating the more clearly the unchristian spirit of

the offender, would be no reason, any more than before, for stopping the progress of the suit; but it would render it indispensable, in its further prosecution, to try the effect of individual applications no longer, but to bring the question before the highest common authority, to which both the parties concerned in it were subject. The alternative, then, which is next suggested, that of referring the matter to the church, has the nature of a final resource; which neither does, nor can be, appealed to until every other means has been tried, and tried in vain; and which, if it fails also, leaves no further expedient to be tried in its stead.

Now the command to tell it to the church as such, supposes of course a church in being; that is, a society or community of persons, living in conjunction somewhere, and professing a common faith in Christ, which makes Christians of them, and discriminates them from all who are not so. It is needless to add, that there was no such society as yet in existence. The word in the Greek, used absolutely in the sense of such a church, occurs only here, and once before, Matt. xvi. 18.^z The final end, too, implied by the command, supposes this society not only in being, but possessed of a power to take cognizance of all disputes among its members as such, at least all disputes which concern the injuries in question. It supposes, too, the persons addressed at the time, viz. the apostles of our Saviour, to be the representatives of this society, and the possessors of this power; neither of which suppositions, any more than the former, was as yet the case. It is clear, then, that the hearers of our Lord, at this part of

^z Harm. P. iv. 8.

his discourse, are addressed, as they hitherto were, in their future rather than their present capacity; and consequently in the language of prophecy, as much as of precept and exhortation.

The possession of authority by this society in general, or by some part of it, which gives them the privilege of deciding in such disputes, is implied in the possession of power to *bind* and to *loose*. These terms are clearly metaphorical; and the metaphor, we may take it for granted, is peculiar to the genius of the Hebrew language^a: yet whatever be the foundation of the usage of speech itself, such is the opposition between its terms, that the one is the reverse of the other—both being supposed the acts of one authority, to *bind* is the opposite of to *loose*, and to *loose* of to *bind*, with reference to the same instance or subject of its jurisdiction.

But further, since it is declared in the text, that whichever of these opposite effects of the same power should have taken place on earth, a similar and corresponding effect should take place in heaven; it follows that the power is spiritual, not civil, and its effects such as a religious, not a political, authority is privileged to bring to pass. Now the jurisdiction of a spiritual power must be spiritual also; a jurisdiction over the consciences of

^a Josephus has the phrase, *λύειν τε καὶ δεῖν*, of the power conceded to the Pharisees in the reign of queen Alexandra; but apparently in the proper sense of imprisoning or setting at liberty. B. i. v. 2.

The terms are used proverbially, (for helping in any way,) Sophocles, *Antigone*, 39.

τί δ', ὦ ταλαίφρων, εἰ τάδ' ἐν τούτοις, ἐγὼ
λύουσ' ἂν ἢ φάπτουσα προσθείμην πλέον;

men—whose proper business is with the guilt, or remission of the guilt of sin—the infliction or removal of spiritual censures—the suspension, alienation, or restoration of spiritual privileges, as entailed upon spiritual relations; and the like. If so, the acts of *binding* on the one hand, and of *loosing* on the other, must be understood of the opposite acts of a spiritual authority, so exerted, the one undoing the other: to *bind*, will be to retain the guilt of sin, and so to remove or suspend the enjoyment of spiritual privileges; to *loose*, will be to absolve from, or to remit, the guilt of sin; and so to communicate, or to restore, the possession of spiritual rights.

When our Saviour addressed St. Peter, upon occasion of his memorable confession, he used the same language to him *individually*, with respect to this power of binding and loosing, which he now employs to *all* the apostles in common. “And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou bindest on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou loosest on earth shall be loosed in heaven^b.” The possession of keys implies the power of opening or locking a door; and that, the power of admitting or keeping out of an house, a city, a society; agreeably to what Isaiah says, xxii. 22, of the power committed to the Messiah: “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut, and he shall shut, and none shall open.” And as this power of the keys is further described as that of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, it implies also the power of admitting into, or of excluding from, the kingdom of heaven; and consequently,

^b Matt. xvi. 19. Harm. P. iv. 8.

as a preliminary step to either, the remission of the guilt of sin on the one hand, and its non-remission on the other. For until sin is remitted, there is no admission into the kingdom of heaven; and when it is remitted, there is no exclusion from it; as we may take it for granted. In this instance, then, we may conclude that the first part of the verse, which conveyed the power of the keys, conveyed the spiritual authority necessary to remit or to retain the guilt of sin; and the second, which spoke of the binding and loosing upon earth as to be followed by the like effect in heaven, spoke of the acts of that power, or the instances in which its jurisdiction was properly to be exerted. To *bind*, then, is to retain sin, to *loose* is to remit it; both with a view to a proper effect, admission into, or exclusion from, the kingdom of heaven, respectively.

When Jesus appeared to the apostles on the evening of the resurrection, among other things, according to St. John, he said to them, as follows: ἄν τινων ἀφῆτε τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἀφίενται αὐτοῖς· ἄν τινων κρατῆτε κεκράτηται^c. In rendering this verse, it would have been better to retain the proper sense of the terms throughout: “If ye let go the sins of any, they are let go to them; if ye hold fast *the sins* of any, they are “held fast.” To let go and to hold fast are properly bodily acts, but are here used as equivalent to remitting and retaining, respectively; and so far as the effect in either instance is concerned, are clearly equivalent to *loosing* on the one hand, and to *binding* on the other. Now this letting go and this holding fast are here restricted to *sins*, that is, to the

^c John xx. 23. Harm. P. v. 9.

guilt and penalties of sin: therefore so must the binding and loosing in the other passages be also^d.

No society, whether religious or political, can subsist in the present state of things, without the possession of a coercive and penal jurisdiction, vested in some competent authority, for the restraint and punishment of such as have offended, or would offend, against the laws, the constitution, the peace and good government of the society. The power of making laws which shall be binding on the members of the society, is essential to its very existence, and prior to the power of punishing those who offend against them. The conveyance of authority, therefore, to some persons or other, to impose or remove laws, forms, and ordinances in general, for the constitution, discipline, and government of the church, may be supposed included in the commission of an authority to bind and to loose; more, however, from the reason of the thing, than from the precise import of the terms.

That a judicial power over the consciences, and even over the persons, of the subordinate members of the church, was both claimed and exercised by the apostles, as a part of their apostolical jurisdiction—there are undoubted testimonies to prove. It

^d In the epistle of the church of Vienne and Lyons, Rel. Sacræ, i. 293. 18. l. 14, the phrase, *ἔλυνον μὲν ἅπαντας, ἐδέσμευον δὲ οὐδένα*, occurs, in the sense of binding or absolving the conscience. Rel. Sacræ. iii. 70. l. 3: Concilium Carthagin. 11: quando permiserit ipse qui legem dedit, ut ligata in terris etiam in cælis ligata essent, solvi autem possent illic, quæ hic prius in ecclesia solverentur. Constitutiones Apostol. ii. 18. PP. Apostol. 163. A: *γνώριζε οὖν, ὃ ἐπίσκοπε, τὸ ἀξίωμα σου, ὅτι ὡς τοῦ δεσμεῖν ἐκκληρώσω τὴν ἐξουσίαν, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ λύειν.*

would not, however, be promised that on every act of spiritual censure, discharged by them on earth, a similar effect, that is, a sanction, ratification, and confirmation of the act, should without fail take place in heaven—were it not certain beforehand, that every such act of theirs would be justly and legitimately performed. And this would suppose that the agents themselves were incapable of erring, or doing wrong; and therefore were so far different from common men, as to be either infallible themselves, or under the influence of a guide and direction which was. Hence, perhaps, it was, that Jesus communicated to the apostles the power of retaining or remitting sin, with a significant action, intimating the previous communication and reception of the Holy Ghost; viz. by breathing on them, and saying, (Λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιον) “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

With regard, however, to the question, how far the same power was intended to be communicated to their successors in the government of the church, or has been; we may justly, perhaps, conclude, that to whatever extent the possession of some such authority in general was necessary to the very being of a Christian society, (in this respect, resembling any other;) to that extent it was included in the original grant, and to that extent it may be supposed reserved to the lawful successors of the apostles, from age to age, in the government of the church. But since men, who are not under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost, are liable to err; and as we cannot be sure of any of the heads of the church, at any time, except the apostles, that they are, or they were, under such a control; we cannot

conclude, upon the strength of the present assurance, that the acts of any such heads, at any time, except those of the apostles, transacted on earth, are or were to be infallibly sanctioned and confirmed in heaven. In their case, this ratification must be assumed to follow, or to have followed, conditionally, not absolutely; that is, if the acts are or were just and right in themselves, as well as made by a competent authority, (which can be best known to God alone,) we may presume that they are and were valid: if not, which is a possible case, they cannot or could not be confirmed in heaven—though made upon earth, they will be or they were reversed in heaven—as the acts of mistaken, nay perhaps of wicked and designing men, they will produce or they did produce no spiritual effect on their objects, if they do not or did not redound on their authors.

The highest punishment, which a civil authority can inflict on the subjects of its jurisdiction, is banishment or death; the highest which a spiritual one can impose on the members of a religious society, is excommunication, which answers virtually to both the former. There are two undoubted instances of the exercise of this power by the apostle St. Paul, one for a moral offence, in the case of the incestuous Corinthian, and the other for the crime of heresy, in the persons of Alexander and Hymeneus. Now excommunication seems to be that consequence of continued impenitence, and obstinacy in the maintenance of an injury, which the text supposes them to lead to at last.

That the appeal to the jurisdiction of the congregation or church, is absolute and final, must be evident. But the interposition of the church is ap-

pealed to at first, not to punish, but if possible, to reclaim the offending party. If any thing happens to him after this, in the way of a penal retribution, it must be for despising, or not respecting even the authority of the church. He must have been called upon in *its* name also, to repair his wrong, and he must have refused to obey this call also, as well as the rest, before he is required to become as an heathen and as a publican, even to his offended brother. If a punishment, then, is inflicted upon him at last, (and surely some punishment must be at last inflicted,) it is still as on a wilful, perverse, incorrigible offender; with whom all the expedients of Christian charity have been tried in vain; every intercession, both public and private, has failed; every appeal to reason, to duty, to conscience, to authority, to influence, has been ineffectual and fruitless.

Now to begin to be held as the heathen and as the publican, certainly implies to cease to be regarded as a Christian and as a brother. One of these terms, as used in contradistinction to that of a brother, denotes what may be called a *political*, and the other, as so used likewise, what may be considered a *moral*, quality of the subject. The word *heathen* or *Gentile* as such, opposes all who belonged to any other society, to all who belonged to the family of faith; that is, all those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, were yet not Christians by profession, to all those who were: and the word *publican* as such, opposes the moral worth, goodness, innocence or purity of all who were not Christians, or did not deserve, in such and such respects, to be considered so, to all who were, and by possessing the

virtues of that character, were justly entitled to its name. But the offending party was originally a brother and a Christian : by becoming as an heathen and a publican, he has ceased to be either ; he has lost his former character, and has put on another, the very reverse of it. It is reasonable to suppose that something has intervened, to account for the change ; something which stripped him of his former character, and invested him with his new : and if so, this can be nothing but a formal act of excommunication, or what is equivalent to it. Nothing else could make one, who was before a Christian and a brother, no longer either ; but instead of that, as an heathen and a publican.

The doctrine of the texts, which follow next, is the efficacy of prayer ; and the assurance of the presence of Jesus Christ, and his cooperation, with the solemn acts of his assembled church—both, as placed on their proper basis, the condition of unanimity in the objects of the prayer, and in the purpose of the coming together. By the first it is asserted, that if two of them, that is, of the hearers ; (and less than two, it is manifest, could not be supposed to concur in any act ;)—should agree together upon earth, concerning any thing that they might ask, it should come to pass unto them from the Father, who was in heaven : and by the second, that where two or three were, being gathered together in the name of Christ, there Christ himself was, in the midst of *them*.

The second of these verses is, indeed, so connected with the former, as to assign the reason why even the concurrent petitions of any two, who should agree together, and therefore we must suppose, be met together previously, in consequence of such

agreement, to ask any thing in common, should be granted; viz. because Christ himself also under such circumstances, should be present with them. But this very condition implies the intercession, and the efficacy of the intercession, of Christ; if the consequence of his being present where common prayers are preferred by those who are met together in his name, is that these prayers are granted of the Father. They are granted, then, of the Father, from respect to the presence of the Son; that is, for the sake of the Son, or on account of his intercession, who intercedes in behalf of such prayers, and recommends them to the Father. Moreover, the last of these verses *demonstrates*, (for I can use no weaker term to describe the force of such an argument,) the omnipresence and omniscience, and therefore the *divinity*, of Jesus Christ. For if Christ is present, and knows what is passing, where any two or three are met together in his name; does it not follow that he is, or may be, present and know what is passing, among innumerable congregations of his worshippers—in innumerable places—yet at the same moment of time? And can this be possible of any but God? Moreover, if he is always so present with two or three, it is but a natural inference to conclude that he may likewise be present even with one; that is, that every individual Christian may be at all times as much in the presence of Christ, as any two or three, so long as *they* are met together.

So far as the promise contained in these two texts, is of general scope and application, nothing can more strongly prove the utility, or rather the necessity, of agreement in prayer, at all times when men meet together to celebrate this act of worship in

common—with a view to the attainment of its legitimate objects. They demonstrate, therefore, the expediency, or rather the necessity, of a *common* prayer, for such offices of public worship; and if of a *common* prayer, of a *standing* form of prayer, and not of one which is liable to fluctuate and vary, at the discretion of the officiating minister. If we interpret the texts strictly; the first of them implies that those who agree together to ask any thing in common, agree *beforehand* about what they should ask, and come together *on purpose* to ask it; and the second, that the two or three are met together in the name of Christ, *before* he himself comes, and is present with them also. Now people can never know beforehand what they shall meet together to ask, nor consequently come together to ask for it in concert, unless they agree to use a *common*, and that a *standing*, form of prayer.

As this, then, is a natural and obvious construction of these texts, and such is the useful, practical inference, which may at all times be derived from them; far be it from me to insinuate that they were not always designed to afford it. But since, on the fact of this preliminary condition to the success of prayer, and to the presence and cooperation of Christ with the acts of his church, the desired effect is absolutely promised—that the object of the prayer shall be granted—that Christ will be with his congregation, approving of and confirming all that they do—the primary construction of such passages must be restricted to the first or extraordinary state of things, when the affairs of the church were directed by the apostles, and they by the Holy Ghost. Such declarations, then, are among that number which must be

received *absolutely* in one sense, and *relatively* in another ; between which a just and rational criticism of the language of scripture, will always draw the needful distinction, before it proceeds to apply them in any manner.

Many such declarations there are, especially in the gospels, which have a primary reference to the Hebrew church, or to the church in the time of the apostles, but which we should be much mistaken if we applied literally to the case of the church in all ages, and among all societies. I will specify only the following at present, because of its affinity to the passage we are considering. “ And all things soever
 “ that ye may ask for in prayer, believing, ye shall
 “ receive ^e.”—“ Therefore, I say unto you, What
 “ things soever ye ask for, praying, believe that ye
 “ are receiving *them* ; and they shall be unto you ^f.”
 The condition premised to this assurance, might be literally fulfilled in the time of the apostles ; and the consequence attached to it also, might be literally realized then. But could any such condition be literally fulfilled at present, or could the promise attached to the condition, in case of its fulfilment, be expected to be literally performed at present ? Could any Christian persuade himself now, that he *was* receiving, even *when* asking, whatever he might be asking in prayer ; or would any Christian, who could bring his mind to entertain this persuasion, assuredly find it even so, as he was thinking ? When Christians recover the power of removing mountains by a word ; of commanding the most stupendous miraculous effects, nothing doubting of the event ;

^e Matt. xxi. 22. Harm. P. iv. 65.

^f Mark xi. 24. Harm. P. iv. 66.

they may regain this confidence in the success of their prayers to God, which is implied in the very *act* of praying, as founded in a well-grounded assurance that they can ask nothing from him, which he is not beforehand always ready to grant, and will not immediately grant, as soon as they ask it.

In like manner, though it may be necessary even now, that prayers should be unanimous, in order to be successful: yet it is not now singly sufficient to ensure the success of such prayers, that they are made in concert. If prayers, under any circumstances, are to attain their object, they must ask for nothing but what is lawful and right, and fit both for the Deity to bestow, and for men to receive: but men may pray, and may even agree to pray, if not deliberately, (though that too is possible,) yet ignorantly and unadvisedly for the contrary. For we do not always know *for what* to pray, no more than *how* to pray. And even when the object of prayers, though made in common, is something confessedly innocent and lawful, yet it may not always be expedient for those that pray, to receive it, nor consistent with the general or particular purposes of the moral government of their heavenly Father, to vouchsafe it. Even the prayers, then, which are made in common, and which the congregation meet together to prefer, knowing what they are, and competently able to judge beforehand that they are for such things in general as moral agents and Christians, may lawfully ask—whether as relating to evils from which they wish to be delivered, or to blessings which they desire to possess—must still be preferred subject to the qualification with which our own Liturgy concludes its form of daily prayer;

that Christ, who is present with his worshippers where they are met together, and hears and recommends their petitions, would fulfil them *as* he thinks to be most expedient for them; granting them two things only, which under all circumstances *must* be for their undoubted advantage, and therefore under all circumstances *may* fitly be prayed for; viz. knowledge of his truth in the present world, and everlasting life in the world to come.

We are now arrived at that part of the discourse, out of which the parable immediately arose; but we cannot yet proceed to explain the parable until we have considered the question of St. Peter, and the answer returned to it, (ver. 21, 22,) since that gave occasion to the parable.

That this question arose out of the preceding admonitions, and therefore proposes some difficulty *suggested* by them, but not *resolved*; that this difficulty concerns the forgiveness of injuries, and therefore was suggested probably by the doctrine inculcated, verse 15—17; may be taken for granted. But between this doctrine, and the *prima facie* construction of the question, and still more, of the answer returned to it, there is an appearance of inconsistency, which it would not be proper to pass over unnoticed.

For first, it is to be presumed that the decision of our Lord concerning the forgiveness of injuries, contained in this answer, relates to such injuries and their forgiveness, under such circumstances as were presupposed in the question; but to such alone: and secondly, with this presumption—that the forgiveness of all such injuries, though appa-

rently limited to a definite number of times, (however considerable,) is in fact *unlimited*, and must always be granted, under such circumstances, however often there is occasion for it; may likewise justly be supposed. The duty of forgiveness, then, under such circumstances, appears to be stated as unconditional, as at all times absolute and at all times peremptory. The condition, consequently, even of the offending party's repentance, seems to be excluded, as well as any other. Every injury, and in what manner soever committed, whether it be repented of or not, whether its forgiveness be solicited or not, it appears to be enjoined, must be forgiven.

Now, how are we to reconcile this conclusion with the doctrine so recently inculcated, respecting the resentment of such injuries as passed between one brother and another, and the modes of procuring their redress? The expedients then recommended were all designed for one and the same effect, viz. to bring the offending party to a proper sense of his misconduct; after which, we may presume, he was to be forgiven, as matter of course; but without which, the prosecution of redress might go on from one stage to another, until it ended in the excision of the person in fault from the communion of the church itself, as no longer fit to continue a member of a Christian society.

The previous doctrine, then, clearly supposes the possibility of a case, in which an injury received *could* not be forgiven; nay more, *was* not to be forgiven; a case, in which the article of the duty, binding on the conscience even of a Christian, was to sue for redress, so long as there was a disposition

to refuse it—and to persist in the suit, to whatever extremities it might lead, while the same spirit of resistance to it was persevered in also. Is it conceivable, then, that the question of St. Peter, so soon after the statement of this doctrine, related to the forgiveness of *all* injuries, and under *all* circumstances; or that the answer of Jesus prescribed a *new* rule of duty, so inconsistent with the former as this, that *all* injuries, under *all* circumstances, were to be forgiven?

This difficulty is resolved by turning to the parallel passage of St. Luke's Gospel, which has been already once referred to^g. It will appear from that passage, that the question in the present instance concerned a case entirely new, and consequently not as yet anticipated, nor provided for. On this second occasion, after expressing himself on the subject of scandals as he had done before, Jesus continued; "Take heed to yourselves: and if thy brother offend against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he offend against thee seven times a day, and turn to thee seven times a day, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

The first of these precepts, which requires the party who has received an injury from a brother Christian, to rebuke him for it, that is, to remonstrate and expostulate with him, clearly coincides with the direct intention of the various modes of action prescribed before also, in reference to the same case; and what is next enjoined, viz. on condition of his repenting, to forgive the offender the injury committed, coincides with the spirit and final end of the expedients likewise suggested; none of

^g Luke xvii. 3, 4. Harm. P. iv. 44.

which had any purpose in view, but to bring the offender to a sense of his fault, and to make him desirous of forgiveness; in order, as was justly to be presumed, that he might be forgiven.

But in the precept next subjoined, the very language employed contains an implicit indication not only of a general, but even of a particular coincidence, with what passed on this present occasion. The supposition of one brother's offending against another *seven* times a day, and one brother's asking forgiveness of another *seven* times a day, and one brother's receiving forgiveness of another *seven* times a day; appears to me a presumptive proof that when our Lord pronounced this decision, he had in his mind the question which St. Peter proposed on this occasion, and the terms in which it had been put: "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I shall forgive him? "until *seven* times?"

Now the rule of duty, prescribed on this second occasion, so far as it inculcates the doctrine of absolute forgiveness, coincides with the *prima facie* construction of the answer returned to this question: so far as it inculcates this duty, subject to the condition of the penitence of the injuring party, it specifies a circumstance, which did not at first sight appear in the former direction. It is to be presumed, however, on the authority of the second allusion to the subject, that the same condition to the duty of absolute forgiveness, though not expressed, was still to be understood, on the first occasion, as well as on the second; viz. the condition of the offender's repenting, and desiring to be forgiven, before forgiveness could be extended to him.

Now this, we may undertake to say, is entirely a *new* case, in comparison of that which has all along been supposed, until now. With respect to *that* case—it is not more plainly assumed that an injury strictly so called, has been committed by one brother Christian against another, than that no regret, or repentance has been felt for it, no redress, or reparation, has been offered for it by the offender. About *such* a case, then, as about something *new*, we cannot suppose that St. Peter would begin to ask for further information; still less, that if he did, our Lord would return any answer, or propose any rule of duty, different from the former.

Assuming this case, however, as already provided for, St. Peter, or any other of our Lord's hearers, might proceed to inquire about another, which was capable of being suggested by it, yet could not be considered included in it; a case which would prosecute the former, and take up the question of injuries and their forgiveness, where the decision just made, appeared to have left it, in order to extend and enlarge it. It might be implied by that decision, that an injury, to be forgiven, must still be repented of: but it was not clear from it, whether every injury, even when repented of, was necessarily to be forgiven, or not.

This then is the point, on which St. Peter desires additional information. Though no injury was to be forgiven that was not repented of; was every injury that was repented of, to be forgiven? Admitting the truth of the proposition, Every injury to be forgiven must be repented of; was the converse of the proposition not less true, Every injury when repented of, must be forgiven?

An inquiry to this effect proceeds on the supposition, that the duty of forgiving injuries, committed by one brother against another, subject to the condition that their forgiveness is actually sought for, and agreeable to the wish of the offender himself, up to a certain point is peremptory and positive—beyond that point, even under the same circumstances, may not be so; that charity and forbearance themselves have proper limits, within which they will not be free to refuse the required forgiveness, but beyond which they will; so that it might be just as consistent with either to withhold the same thing, after a certain time, as to concede it before; or rather, as much a matter of duty, under certain circumstances, not to concede it, as under others, not to deny it.

It is certain, that by repeated provocations, the disposition of an injured party to forgive, even where forgiveness is solicited, may be sensibly impaired, while the right or title of an offending one to be forgiven, even when he is penitent and sorry for his fault, may seem to be proportionably diminished. It is certain, too, that the supposed duty of always being obliged to forgive an injury, on the simple condition of the offender's asking to be forgiven, *appears* to hold out an encouragement to the repeated commission of offences—if any one is so inclined. For what is to restrain a man from abusing the easiness and indulgence of charity, if he has nothing to fear from the consequences of resentment; if he has only to ask to be forgiven, whatever he may have done, in order to be restored to the favour even of the sufferer himself?

We have but to suppose, then, that up to a cer-

tain point the duty of forgiveness, on the terms of contrition and repentance previously, is not optional, but after a certain point it is; and we account for the question of Peter. Or we have only to suppose, that it is as much a point of duty to withhold forgiveness *after* a certain time, as to concede it *before*; and we shall also account for the question. In either case, it might seem to be desirable, or even necessary, that the limits of duty should be known; that up to what extent the exercise of forgiveness was not discretionary, and after or beyond what it was, should be well defined. That this limit is expressed, in the question, by *seven* instances of provocation, on the one hand, and *seven* instances of forgiveness, on the implied condition of repentance, on the other, is an hypothetical assumption, as the form of the question itself demonstrates; and the foundation of the assumption is the virtue of this number, in the estimation of the Jews, to denote any thing that was complete and perfect of its kind, whether in a good or an evil sense. Seven instances of offence committed by one brother against another, might therefore be naturally proposed by any of our Lord's hearers, as the limit up to which aggression and provocation were venial, if aggression and provocation were ever to cease to be so: seven instances of forgiveness, where wrongs had been committed and received, might be the utmost exertion of charity and forbearance, necessary to their perfection, if their exertion was ever to be limited.

It is not an improbable conjecture too, that the question of Peter, so expressed and intended, contained an allusion to certain doctrines of the rabbis, or moral teachers of the Jews, with regard to the

practical duty of the forgiveness of injuries. The precept of not returning evil for evil was enjoined by the law, as well as repeated by the gospel: and amongst the difficulties of practical religion, among the many hard lessons which human nature has had to learn, in opposition to her own dictates, desires, and tendencies, whether in the school of Moses or in that of Christ, this of overcoming the disposition to revenge, and returning good for evil, is not the least. The compromise of natural appetite and the sense of duty, by which the disposition to resent an injury, and the desire of revenge, up to a certain extent, should not be at liberty to act, but after it should; resembles one of those refined distinctions, by which, in other questions of conformity or non-conformity to acknowledged principles of duty, the popular instructors contrived to steer a middle course between conscience and convenience.

To a question, however, like this of Peter, which concerned the forgiveness by one brother of the injuries committed against him by another, on the condition of sincere repentance, it was morally impossible that our Saviour could return any other answer than this: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven;" after which, the parable is immediately subjoined.

How naturally, then, the parable arises out of the train of the previous discourse, as continued to the present point, appears from the above review of the preliminary matter: how necessary it is, even to the moral of the part immediately preceding, and consequently of the whole paragraph, from verse 15 downwards, out of which it arose, may be shewn as follows:

The decision just pronounced, in reference to the difficulty proposed by Peter, defined the rule to be observed in action under all such circumstances; but did not specify the reasons or grounds of the rule itself. The duty of forgiveness, where forgiveness is sought, is clearly laid down: the obligation to the duty does not appear. The motive which must actuate to its performance, the reason which must dispose the offended party himself to be ready at all times to pardon an offender, who merely desires and seeks to be forgiven, has not as yet been explained. The rule itself, like any other law designed to regulate the conduct of responsible agents, is as precise and definite as every practical injunction should be; and so plain and intelligible, as not to be mistaken, except willingly; nor misapplied, except deliberately. But if the rule does not require to be received on the footing of a deference to *authority* merely; if it is founded in reason and recognised by conscience; if there is a moral fitness in it, which only requires to be pointed out to be admitted; what is this principle of the duty, it may be asked; what is the ground of the obligation, which makes it incumbent on every moral agent from considerations as much of reason and conscience, of fitness and propriety, as of submission to the will of a moral lawgiver, that he should at all times be ready to grant the forgiveness of an injury committed against him, because the injurer desires it of him?

If it was expedient that this point should be cleared up to the satisfaction of the hearers, then without some further explanation, there would have been an omission, which must have been sensibly felt. The parable, as we shall see, supplies this

omission; and in a much more interesting, impressive, and lively manner, than it could have been supplied by a general declaration, teaches us that the true reason why we are at all times bound to forgive, or to be ready to forgive, the offences of others against ourselves, is that we are ourselves at all times offenders against God, at all times in need of his forgiveness for offences committed against him: a reason, which being of perpetual force, renders the obligation founded upon it, perpetual also; and being of universal application, makes the duty proposed for observance, binding upon all.

That the parable, then, about to ensue, must be purely moral or didactic; that it is the first of its kind which the gospel history as yet has furnished, and so far is to be considered a specimen of the rest; may be taken for granted. The number of the moral parables collectively, in comparison of that of the allegorical, is small; and therefore they are not likely to afford much scope for difference of style or manner, nor consequently for comparison together, in judging of their particular merits. There are few parables, however, of either class, which considered merely as historical narratives, can be pronounced superior to this first of the moral; so remarkable for the variety of its incidents; the changes of fortune; the opposition and contrast of personal character, which appear in the story. The emotions which its perusal is calculated to excite, are proportionably many and various; our admiration, our indignation, our pity, are successively excited in their turns; our wonder and astonishment are kept alive throughout. Each incident that transpires, is something new, yet something con-

sistent and natural. The conduct of one party and the treatment of another at one time, are reversed and succeeded by just the contrary, soon after: a very unexpected piece of kindness is first shewn, and then as unexpectedly recalled; an extraordinary act of liberality, by which one individual had benefited, is followed by as extraordinary a denial of consideration and indulgence on his own part, to a suitor of his own, in a case many times inferior to his. The result which ensues under these circumstances, as the combined effect of the whole, is not less just and reasonable, than sudden and unexpected.

THE PARABLE.

MATTHEW xviii. 23—35.

23 “ For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a
 “ certain king, who would hold an account with his servants.
 “ 24 And when he had begun to hold *it*, there was brought to
 “ him one, a debtor in ten thousand talents. 25 And when he
 “ had not *wherewith* to repay, his lord commanded him to be
 “ sold, and his wife and *his* children, and all things soever that
 “ he had; and payment again to be made. 26 The servant
 “ therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have
 “ patience with me, and I will repay thee every thing. 27 And
 “ the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and re-
 “ leased him, and forgave him the debt. 28 And when that
 “ servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants, who
 “ owed him an hundred pence. And he laid hands on him, and
 “ began to hold *him* by the throat, saying, Repay me what
 “ it is thou owest *me*. 29 His fellow-servant then, having fallen
 “ at his feet, began to beseech him, saying, Have patience with
 “ me, and I will repay thee every thing. 30 And he would not:
 “ but went his way and cast him into prison, until he repaid
 “ what was owing. 31 And when his fellow-servants saw the
 “ things which had happened, they were very much grieved;
 “ and went and informed their lord of all the things which had
 “ happened. 32 Then his lord, having called him to him, saith

“to him, O thou wicked servant, all that debt have I forgiven thee, forasmuch as thou besoughtest me ; ³³ shouldest not thou also have pitied thy fellowservant, as I too pitied thee ? ³⁴ And being incensed, his lord delivered him to the tormentors, until he repaid all that was owing by him.

³⁵ “ So shall my Father likewise, who is in heaven, do unto you, unless ye forgive from your hearts each *of you* his brother their trespasses.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE characters or persons, who take part in the transaction, are distinguished in this instance also, as principal and subordinate. The principal personage is naturally one and the same ; whose name and relation however, with respect to the part which he acts, are first represented as those of a king. If we are at liberty to assume that the transaction, recorded in the parable, may be considered a matter of fact ; it will follow that this king is a real personage ; and there is no reason why, even as such, he may not be supposed one of the monarchs, Assyrian, Median, or Persian, who at different times reigned over the East. There is nothing in the part which the parable assigns either to him, or to any other agent, that can be shewn to offend against this supposition.

The subordinate characters, with reference to their part in the same transaction, are generally described as the servants (or slaves) of the principal party : and therefore, the relation of servant supposing the relation of master, the principal personage, besides sustaining the name and relation of a *king*, which properly oppose him to subjects, must be considered to sustain also the relative character of a *master*, which properly opposes him to servants.

If, indeed, this personage himself is actually some eastern monarch of ancient times; the relations both of king and master would coincide in his person with reference to any, distinct from himself. The principle of an eastern government was the same anciently as in modern times; viz. that of absolute despotism on the part of the governor, and absolute subjection on the part of the governed. The relation, then, of the servants (or slaves) of the king, would apply not only to the members of his household in particular, but to the complex of his subjects collectively: nor would it make any difference to the nature and circumstances of the parabolic history, which of these descriptions of character were understood to be meant in opposition to that of the king. The relation, however, of his servants, in the strict sense of the term, and not merely of his subjects, is probably that which is intended.

But besides their relation of his servants or subjects, the subordinate personages referred to the principal, stand in another capacity, distinct from both; viz. that of *debtors* of the principal personage; that of parties who owe him sums of money, for the payment of which they are responsible. The relation of debtor on the one hand, is opposed to that of creditor on the other; and though neither of these is inconsistent, *per se*, with that of master and servant, or of king and subject, yet so far as concerns the particular transaction which passes and is recorded in the parable, the relation of creditor on the side of the principal party, as combined with that of king or master, is paramount to it; and the relation of debtor on the side of the subordinate parties, while conjoined with that of subjects or servants,

takes precedence of it. The proper relation of both parties to each other, according to the parable, is not that of a king to his subjects, or a master to his servants, *simply*; but of a king who has an account to hold with his subjects, of a master who is a creditor in respect of his servants; and *vice versa*.

Now this further relation between a king and his subjects, or a master and his servants, might be contracted by the parties in the parable, in various ways; of which the most probable, and most consistent with the other circumstances of the narrative, we may presume to be this; that as every government requires instruments and ministers, and every extensive household must have officers and managers; these of the subjects or servants of the king, who are represented as his debtors likewise, were those whom he had previously employed as his subordinate agents in his public or private affairs: as governors of provinces, or heads of the various departments of his royal establishment; as responsible for the payment of tribute, or for his household expenses; as the farmers and collectors of his revenues, or the stewards and disbursers of his privy purse. The business, then, which is supposed to be transacted between them; viz. the holding of an audit or reckoning—the exaction of an account on the one hand, and the giving or furnishing it on the other—would be nothing unusual either in the administration of governments, or in the œconomy of private families. Times there are, when such accounts must be called for by the head of a state, or the master of a family, from those who are responsible for them; and when they must be rendered by subjects or

servants, in return for the confidence which their superiors have reposed in them.

It is implied, indeed, that the determination of the king to hold this account with his servants, is something sudden ; and it is certain that the juncture at which the account is called for, finds them unprepared to render it. We may infer, then, that the account was one of considerable standing ; and its exaction, to the parties at least who were liable to it, and ought to have been at all times ready to furnish it, was more or less an unexpected event. There is no improbability in this particular circumstance, to militate against the supposed reality of the transaction in general. Was this account an affair which sometime passed between an eastern monarch and his servants ? If so, such is notoriously the character of an eastern government, that it may justly be described as not less capricious than arbitrary ; not more remarkable for unmeasured laxity and indulgence at one time, than for rigour and severity at another ; and that too, towards the same persons, and under circumstances exactly the same.

When this account had once been begun, it is to be supposed that it would extend to *all* the servants of the king, who stood in the relation of his debtors, and were consequently liable to it ; though the history of the account or its consequences, as given in the parable, for particular reasons might be confined to the case of *one*. But this one was the first whose case came under review ; and it seems to be implied, that from whatever cause, this one had the largest account to render of all ; which might be reason enough for calling upon him to produce his account

first. Hence the words, which relate to this part of the transaction—in which the very order of the original is emphatic: “And when he had begun to hold (the account), there was brought to him one, “a debtor in ten thousand talents;” as leaving it to implication that *this* debt was a singular circumstance: that however many had to render an account as well as this one, none had to account for so much as he.

The amount of this debt, which is stated at ten thousand talents, reduced to money of our denomination would amount to upwards of 1,900,000 pounds; a very enormous sum certainly. Great as it is, the moral of the parable requires its magnitude strictly to be taken into account, if the conduct of both parties, in the after part of the transaction, is to be set in its proper light. The greater the debt which was owing *to* the king and *by* the servant, the greater were his liberality and kindness in remitting it; and greater in proportion was the gratitude due from the servant, on account of its remission, and the obligation thereby contracted to act in the same way himself towards a fellow-servant, and under circumstances in any way resembling his own.

Nor is it impossible for the greatness of the sum itself to be probably explained, so as to make it consistent with the reality of the transaction. This sum being described as a *debt*, and the party who was called upon to account for it, being represented as a debtor, however considerable it was something which he was actually liable to pay; which his master had an absolute right to exact. Now this might be the case with the governor of a province; with a

farmer of the revenue; or even with a steward of the royal household; all of whom would have large sums either entrusted to them, or passing through their hands, for which they would be responsible.

The wealth of the creatures and favourites of the reigning kings, in eastern governments, has always been notorious; and by the laws and constitution of such governments, before adverted to, the property of the subject, however great and ample, was thought to be entirely the king's; and if he pleased, might at any time be claimed by him as his own. The earliest Greek historian, Herodotus, supplies a remarkable instance of this truth, in what he relates to have passed between the Persian king, Xerxes, when he was wintering at Sardes, B. C. 481. the year before his expedition into Greece, and the Lydian Pythius, one of his subjects^d. This man, though the richest individual of his time, next to the king, and computed to be worth four millions and upwards of our coin, in money alone, is represented as making an offer of it all to the king, on the principle that it *all* belonged to him.

With regard, however, to the magnitude of the debt in the present instance, and also to the explanation of the mode in which it might easily be contracted; it happens that sacred writ itself has supplied a case much to the point, in illustration of both. When Haman, the favourite and prime minister of the reigning king of Persia, Ahasuerus, whom I think to have been Artaxerxes the last of the name, (Artaxerxes Ochus,) had conceived the design of exterminating the Jews throughout the king's dominions, and had framed an artful excuse

^d Herod. vii. 27, 28.

for that purpose, by which their total, simultaneous destruction might seem to be only a necessary measure of political prudence; in order to reconcile the king to the act, he offered to pay the amount of the tribute, at that time levied from the Jews, *out* of his *own* purse. Nor is it by any means certain that he did not propose to make himself responsible for the payment of a yearly sum, instead of some sum, however large, which was to be paid once for all. His words were that “ he would pay the sum to the “ hands of those that had the charge of the business, “ to bring it into the king’s treasuries.”

Now Josephus represents this sum at forty thousand talents of silver, which would be upwards of seven or eight millions of our money^c; and the canonical book of Esther states it at the very sum supposed to constitute the debt in the parable—ten thousand talents of silver^f. The enormous wealth of Haman appears from the amount of such an offer, whether it was meant of one payment merely, or of a payment every year: and our opinion of this wealth is not diminished, when we read that Ahasuerus made him a present of the money; as well as of the people to do what he pleased with them^g. It seems, however, independent of this fact, that there were certain proper officers, under the king, and distinct from Haman, whose business it was to levy this sum as the tribute of the Jews, and to bring it into the king’s treasury. Any one of this number, as a servant, a subject, an officer, or a debtor of the king, might answer to the subordinate character in the parable; and any one of them, whose account had

^c Ant. Jud. xi. vi. 5.

^f Esther iii. 9.

^g Ibid. iii. 11.

been allowed to accumulate or run into arrears, might soon become responsible for a debt as great as that supposed to be due by him. It is evident too, that if under the imperial government of Persia, there were proper persons, who stood in the relation of the exactors of tribute from the Jews alone, or were liable to the payment of such and such a sum annually on account of the Jews alone; there were probably others, who stood in a similar relation to the rest of its subjects in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces, over which it extended in the time of Ahasuerus; and who would have to account for no less sums in behalf of other nations, than these in particular had, in behalf of the Jews^h.

The severity with which the king was at first disposed to treat this servant, upon the discovery of his inability to make good his account, might be the natural effect of indignation, at the unexpected disclosure of a breach of trust, where it ought least to have appeared, viz. in a confidential servant. It might be also the only practicable expedient left, for procuring the restitution of any part, much more of the whole, of the debt. Rigorous, however, as it may seem to a modern reader, it is vindicated by

^h Josephus relates, how Joseph, the nephew of the Jewish highpriest for the time being, Onias, undertook to farm the revenues of Syria, Phœnicia, Judæa, and Samaria, a portion only of the dominions of the king of Egypt, (Ptolemy Euergetes,) for sixteen thousand talents per annum: *Ant. Jud.* xii. iv. 1—4. Also, how Herod undertook to farm that part of his dominions, and of Arabia, which Antony had given to Cleopatra, for two hundred talents per annum. *Ant. Jud.* xv. iv. 2: *B. i.* xviii. 5. Cf. *i. Macc.* xv. 31.

the laws of the relation anciently, between master and slave; laws, which gave the former an absolute, unquestionable right over the person, the property, and even the life of the latter. Nor does it militate against the fact of this relation between the king and his debtor, that the offender himself is supposed to be the father of a family—who had a wife and children, and property of his own, while still in the condition of a slave; all of which were involved, or about to be involved, in the same treatment with himself. Under an eastern and despotic government, all the subjects with their families and households, as well as their private fortunes, were regarded, and if necessary, were treated as alike the slaves and creatures of the prince. Haman had a wife and ten sons, besides numerous friends and connexions; all of whom were included in the consequences of his downfall: and Herodotus tells us how Darius in like manner visited the crime of Intaphernes, (one of the seven Persian noblemen, distinguished by peculiar privileges as having conspired with Darius to depose the magian usurper Smerdis,) on his children and near relationsⁱ. Among the Romans, too, the slaves were not prevented from acquiring and accumulating property of their own: those at least who stood in the relation of *liberti* or freedmen, and yet were not altogether exempt from the jurisdiction of their former masters, often became possessors of large fortunes. The wealth of such freedmen, the favourites of Sylla, of Lucullus, of Pompey, of the Roman emperors, especially of those of Claudius, is notorious.

Besides, the rigorous exaction of the debt in the

ⁱ Herod. iii. 119.

present instance, seems to be placed implicitly on this footing; that as the party in question was the first cited to appear and give in his account, so was he the first to turn out a defaulter: and the amount of his debt being the greatest, the crime of his delinquency could not be the least. He might be one, in whose case insolvency was due to abuse of trust, to embezzlement, to presumption on his master's indulgence, or some other such cause: whose punishment, therefore, might not be more just, than necessary by way of warning, and as an example to others whose account was to be given in next to his.

Be this as it may, the parable which is simply concerned with the fact that the man, though a debtor and justly amenable to payment, yet being called on to make it, was found unable to do so, is naturally silent as to the reasons why he was so. And after all, whatever rigour he is menaced with, it is more in appearance than reality; and serves but to render the indulgence actually extended to him, the more illustrious, because unforeseen and unexpected.

Nor is the change of resolution on the part of the monarch, however sudden, and contrary to his first intentions, a merely arbitrary and capricious act, but a noble instance of the natural power of pity when strongly appealed to, in a kind and placable disposition, over the angry or vindictive feelings; and not less so, over the equally powerful, but more phlegmatic and insidious principle of selfishness and the love of money. The alteration effected in his purpose and behaviour towards his offending servant, can be attributed to nothing but simple com-

passion, spontaneously excited by the suppliant attitude and the humble entreaties of the delinquent himself. Had he persisted in his first determination, without listening to these appeals, doubtless no one could have charged him, not even the object of his resentment, with doing more than right and justice would have authorized him to do, and the conscience of the sufferer itself must have acknowledged to be deserved. The greater, therefore, was the display of his humanity, in consenting to sacrifice his undoubted right, in order to indulge his compassion.

The emotion of pity, suddenly excited by a moving object, has been known to arrest the uplifted arm of anger, just in the act of striking its victim; and all at once to convert the impulse of the most furious of passions, bent upon some desperate gratification, into placability, gentleness, and forgiveness. The king in the present instance, was free to have pursued his original purpose of punishment; he was not less free to extend his pardon to the offender: and in listening to the persuasions of clemency, instead of the demands of justice, he was doing an injury to none but himself: he was defrauding or impoverishing none but himself. The triumph then of forbearance over resentment, of lenity over rigour, and of mercy over justice, could not be more signally displayed than by the kindness which he shews to his debtor at last; a kindness greater not only than he had reason to expect, but also than he appeared himself to wish. He had besought his lord for time and patience in exacting, not for grace and favour in entirely remitting, the debt; and to have conceded only thus much, to have allowed him but the chance of still repaying his debt, without

personal duress or ill-usage, would have been a great indulgence, and more than he was entitled to expect. But his master, having once yielded to the voice of pity, determines to give the impulse of pity its utmost effect, to listen to the simple dictate of compassion—and therefore cancels the past *in toto*; grants the request of the petitioner in full, and more than in full; releasing his person from immediate hardship or restraint; and absolving him from future liability to any such risk, on the same account at least, by forgiving him *all* the debt. The principle of the conduct, then, which is thus pursued by the master and lord of this servant towards him, in the capacity of his debtor, must be resolved into the unmixed impulse of compassion; actuated by a moving appeal to forgiveness, and by an appearance of contrition and repentance on the part of an offender, before strictly amenable to justice and obnoxious to punishment.

The smallness of the debt, supposed to be due by one of his fellow-servants to the same man who stood indebted to the king in so large an amount, is no improbable circumstance, and might be accounted for in a variety of ways. Trifling as it is, the effect of comparing the insignificance of this second debt with the magnitude of the former, is only to contrast the more strongly the disposition which refused to remit so small a sum, when it depended upon itself, with the kindness and liberality which had just been exemplified, in remitting a debt so much more considerable; and that too, when the circumstances, under which each was called upon to act in behalf of another, though in a manner so different with regard to themselves, and

to their respective acts, were exactly the same. And in illustrating this contrast between the conduct of the king towards *his* debtor, and that of this debtor towards any other person in the same circumstances as himself, the smaller the second sum had been, consistently with probability, the more striking must have been the effect.

Hence, as the amount of the first sum was strictly to be attended to, to appreciate the merit of the behaviour of the king towards his debtor; so must the value of this second sum be accurately estimated likewise, if the same man's conduct towards his fellow-servant, so soon after his own treatment by the king, is to be exposed in its true light. An hundred denarii of ancient money amounted to something more than three pounds of ours. And what, we might ask, would there be in so paltry a sum, to make it, under any circumstances, a necessary reason why one man must deal harshly with another; what benefit would be gained by rigorously exacting it; what merit would there be in freely forgiving it? But what shall we think of its value in comparison of ten thousand talents; that is, of nineteen hundred thousand pounds, more than six hundred thousand times its amount? Is it possible, we might say, that one who had just experienced the gratuitous remission of the former sum, in his own person, could think it worth his while, immediately after, to care or concern himself about a debt of three pounds? or had gratitude on his own account no effect upon him, must not mere shame, and common decency, have restrained him from rigorously exacting of another, at such a juncture as that, so contemptible a sum?

It is implied in the parable, that what passes between the two fellow-servants, on the subject of this debt, takes place immediately after the first of them has been dismissed from the presence of his before offended, but now reconciled master—loaded with so considerable and unexpected an obligation; and therefore, as might justly be presumed, with his heart deeply impressed by the sense of its kindness, and anxious to prove himself worthy of it, by his own behaviour in any way that might best attest his gratitude for the extraordinary indulgence of his master. At such a moment, an act of severity towards another person, whatever the instance of it might be; much more an act of severity the very reverse in principle of the kindness by which he had benefited himself; was scarcely possible from one who was not totally destitute of feeling, and insensible to good usage of any kind.

Avarice, or the sordid love of money, might have shut a man's eyes to the perception of shame, and stopped his ears to the intercessions of pity, where his own interest was at stake; at any time but this. But supposing the love of money to be possibly the ruling passion of the hardhearted in other instances, still avarice as such, would not account for the conduct of the man on this occasion. The love of money might suit to the contemptible insignificance of the sum, which he seems to make of so much importance, as well as to the roughness of manner with which it is exacted; but it would not agree to the other circumstances of the case; particularly to the man's previous inability to pay his own just debt to his master, which rendered him so lately obnoxious to his severity, or dependent upon his

clemency, as he was disposed to deal rigorously or indulgently with him.

No principle, or motive of action, will account for the conduct of the man, but that of mere and simple inhumanity; a principle whose essence consists in insensibility to kind impressions; in impenetrability to gratitude; in a moral incapacity of feeling for misfortune, of sympathising with suffering, of listening to entreaty and being affected by the voice of pity: a principle which is absorbed in self, and in the pursuit of its apparent right or interest is regardless of shame and decency, and not to be restrained by any consideration which might otherwise set bounds to cupidity or violence, and make a man moderate, equitable, and forbearing in his treatment of others or the prosecution of his rights, even against his will. It is not possible that this man could have felt the kindness of which he had just been the subject, in ever so little a degree, and not have been actuated by the feeling to shew that he remembered it, and was grateful for it, by acting a corresponding part himself, in a case that so nearly resembled his own, and occurred so soon after. But if he felt it not—good usage could make no impression on him: and as simple benevolence, or pliability, was the only motive to which the conduct of his lord towards him just before, could reasonably be attributed, so is simple obduracy the only principle which will account for his behaviour towards his fellow-servant, immediately after.

The particulars of his conduct, and the circumstances of the transaction, as it passed between them, are in unison with this supposition. It was accident which brought his fellow-servant in his way, so soon

after he had quitted the presence of his master: yet how eagerly does he avail himself of the opportunity afforded by their meeting, to fasten upon, and to claim, him as his debtor; as if it never had before occurred, nor ever would occur again at a fitter time, or in a fitter place. The harshness of his intentions is well expressed by the roughness of his act; by specifying which the history gives us a striking proof of its regard to what is called the decorum of narrative, the keeping and consistency of character: “He laid hands on him, and began to hold *him* by the throat, saying, Repay me what it is thou owest *me*;” “Repay me whatsoever thou owest”—for so the words should properly be rendered. Paltry as was the amount of the debt, he demands its restitution as if his existence depended on it; as if he had nothing else in the world. Yet he was richer by ten thousand talents, at that very time than he had been a moment before; since, whatsoever a creditor has consented to lose, by the remission of the same just debt, his debtor must in all reason be said to have gained. And he demands it in such terms as plainly to intimate, that small or great, necessary or superfluous, he would have it *all* back; he would exact every thing that he could legally claim; he would not renounce a farthing of his due.

It is clearly implied that inconsiderable as the sum may seem to be, it was more than the debtor at that moment was prepared to repay, or it would not have been necessary for him to ask a little longer interval of credit; still less to go to prison, unless he could discharge the debt on the spot. The crime then of his creditor (for under the circumstances of

the case, his conduct in exacting even his own, was highly criminal) is aggravated by the fact, of which he could not but be conscious, that in refusing the indulgence of a little time, he was about to add to the privations of poverty, the bodily hardships and sufferings of imprisonment; which the least forbearance on his own part, without endangering his right, or absolving his debtor from his existing obligations, might so easily have spared.

His fellow-servant, placed in the situation in which he himself had been placed before, and standing in the same relation to him as he himself had done to his master—a debtor, equally convicted of a just debt, and equally conscious of his inability to pay it—acts, under the influence of the same feelings, in the same way that he also had acted; and having no means of satisfying his justice, has recourse to his compassion. He falls down at his feet, as he had fallen down before his master; and he addresses him in the same words, in which his own appeal had been commended to his master; “Have patience with me, and I will repay thee every thing.”

It is scarcely conceivable but that the attitude and entreaties of the man before him, must have called to his mind the recollection of his own behaviour not long ago; even could he have forgotten it previously: and still less, that had he reflected at all either on what he himself had done, or why, or with what success, in so recent an instance, and one so like the present—his conscience must not have smitten him, and strongly remonstrated against the inconsistency as well as cruelty of his own conduct, in what he was doing now. But no dissuasive could

avail against the settled purpose of cupidity, founded on callousness, and rooted in the heart of stone. He would listen, therefore, to no entreaties, but went his way, and cast his victim into prison; not supposing, perhaps, that the news of what he had done would come to the ears of his Lord, whose station at so great an height above himself and his fellow-servants, seemed to place him far beyond the reach of the transactions which might pass among his servants, and far beyond the possibility of being interested in them: or should it be brought to his knowledge, not apprehending that the favour recently conferred upon himself, was likely to be endangered, or liable to be recalled, thereby.

If, however, the conduct of the man, so soon after the receipt of this favour, to one of his fellow-servants, under circumstances which so closely resembled his own case; proved him to be utterly unworthy of the kindness conferred upon him—it was necessary that the fact of his behaviour should be communicated to his master, who was at liberty to rescind his own act; and on being convinced of the reasonableness of so doing, no doubt would rescind it. It is with equal propriety and beauty, that the narrative represents the persons, who are instrumental in reporting this fact to the king, as the fellow-servants of the two debtors; both because they only could have been witnesses of it, and because their interference is attributed to the impulse of feelings, not more honourable to their humanity and sense of justice, than spontaneously suggested by the occasion.

The first debtor's treatment of the second, who was one of their fellow-servants as well as his, so

unnecessarily harsh and severe, would not fail to have made them sympathise with the sufferer, under any circumstances : for men are so formed, that on the principle of mere philanthropy, all extreme, and certainly all needless, acts of rigour or oppression, whatsoever be their objects, and especially if they fall on the poor and helpless, or on those with whom the spectators themselves are connected by any tie however slight, immediately awake their pity in behalf of the injured, and their indignation against the injurious, party. Besides which—the gross inconsistency of the man's behaviour, the ingratitude and want of feeling, by which he was actuated, however much they might be disguised from his own view, would no doubt appear to impartial and indifferent observers, in their true colours and their natural deformity. It is not surprising then that the fellow-servants of each of the parties should have felt both pity, and indignation, and abhorrence, at what they had seen done and suffered ; and on all these accounts, have been very much grieved. They report, therefore, to their common master all that had passed : and both the unmerciful servant, and as we may presume, the victim of his cruelty and the witness of his ingratitude, along with him, are summoned into his presence.

The expostulation of the king with the man, which next takes place, is full of a dignified severity ; nor does he suffer his resentment to arise, or lead him to order the punishment of the offender, until he has exposed his offence, and convicted him of it, even to himself, on the true grounds which rendered it criminal. These grounds are remarkable, and tend to prove very distinctly that the principle as-

signed to the conduct of the man, the principle of simple inhumanity, was rightly assigned.

For, we observe, his guilt is not demonstrated by contrasting the magnitude of the favour which the king had shewn to him, with the smallness of the indulgence he was called on to shew to another person; but simply, by urging upon him the inconsistency of not having allowed himself to be influenced by the same appeal to his compassion, when addressed to him, under the very same circumstances, by another, which he had urged in his own behalf, with the view of persuading his master, and had profited by in his own behalf, through its influence and efficacy with his master. “O thou
“wicked servant, all that debt have I forgiven thee,
“forasmuch as thou besoughtest me; shouldest not
“thou also have pitied thy fellow-servant, as I too
“pitied thee?”

To an argument of this kind, it made no difference whether the debt which he was required to forgive a fellow-servant, was little or great in itself; provided it was less than what had been forgiven himself. Nor could any reply be made to such a question, which might exculpate the offender by justifying his act. His incensed master, therefore, recalls, (as he had full power to recall, and as the merits of the case required him to do,) his former favour; and treating its unworthy subject as if no kindness had ever been extended, or meant to be extended to him, delivers him over to the tormentors, until he should repay the whole of the original debt.

The kings of Persia, as we learn from various authorities, had a description of ministers or servants, who went by the name of *basanistæ*, or tor-

mentors; and whose office, agreeably to the import of their name, was to be the ministers or instruments of torture upon criminals condemned to death, or in any way amenable to punishment: and various were the inventions, and exquisite the refinements of cruelty, which they are known to have applied in the exercise of this duty, on the persons of their unfortunate victims. But the object of consigning the criminal to the hands of justice in the present instance, is that he repay the debt; and as receiving him with that view, these tormentors would have no other duty to perform towards the debtor, than to keep him in safe custody; nor any more severity to exercise upon him, than the obliging him to personal labour, for the benefit of his creditor. In this capacity they would answer to the *πράκτορες*, or exactors, spoken of elsewhere^e: or to the *ὑπηρέτης*, or officer, also mentioned in a similar instance^f. Yet even as condemned merely to

^e Luke xii. 58.

^f Matt. v. 25. Plin. Epp. i. xv. 1: Heus tu, promittis ad cœnam, nec venis! dicitur jus, *ad assem* impendium reddes, nec id modicum.

Of the power which the Roman law gave to the creditor over the debtor, take this account from Aulus Gellius, lib. xx. 1. as a specimen. By the laws of the Twelve Tables, after legal proof of the debt, and a month's interval of suspense, the creditor was at liberty to seize on the person of the debtor; to fasten him in the stocks; to bind him with fetters of fifteen pounds in weight: to restrict him to a stated allowance of food, &c. Lastly, if there were more creditors than one, then at a stated time, the injunction of the law was: *Tertiis nundinis partes secanto, si plus minusve secuerunt, se fraude esto*: that is, as Gellius interprets it, *secare, si vellent, atque partiri corpus addicti sibi hominis permiserunt*.

Learned men, indeed, have contended that the meaning of the law was not to authorize the cutting of the body of the debtor

imprisonment and bodily labour, until he should repay all that was owing by him, (so should the words be rendered,) it is easy to see that the offending party was condemned to imprisonment for life, and to personal duress and suffering which could have no end. The debt was too great for any length of confinement, in the same person's lifetime, or for any personal labours or exertions, while the confinement lasted, to liquidate however gradually, and ultimately to cancel. Such a sentence then, was one from which the criminal could never expect to be absolved, and must continue to suffer to the last moment of his existence. In one word, it was eternal—so far as that which can never cease to be inflicted, while it is still capable of being endured, may be said to be so.

THE MORAL.

From the nature of the representation which we have just considered, it must be evident, that though the parable may be designed for a moral or practical application, affecting the conduct or duties of responsible agents, in certain circumstances, it must still be an application which affects them as placed in definite and specific relations, such as are adumbrated by the several particulars, characters, and relations of the representation in question.

Whatsoever may be meant by the parties whose actual relation to each other will answer to that of

in pieces, but the sale of his person, the auction of his property, to be divided among his creditors. Yet Aulus Gellius understood it literally; so did Dionysius of Halicarnassus (xvi. 9. of Maius' epitome): Quintilian (iii. vi. 84.): and Tertullian, (v. 14. Apologeticus 4.)

the principal and subordinate personages in the parable, they must stand in the general and prior capacity of king and subject, of master and servant, respectively; and whatsoever be the kind of transactions which have passed between them, to answer to the idea of debts, the parties between whom they pass must be placed thereby in the special and secondary relation of creditors and debtors—as creditors entitled to full and entire restitution of something, and as debtors bound to its full and entire repayment.

The parties who answer to the subordinate personages in the parable, must agree together in being alike fellow-subjects of one king, and fellow-servants of one master; and each of them must stand, or be capable of standing, in the double relation of a debtor with respect to his master, and a creditor with respect to his fellow-servant; with this difference between the debts themselves, that whether both are the same in kind or not, the magnitude of that which any one servant may owe to his proper master, must far, very far, exceed the amount of what any of his fellow-servants may owe to him.

The same subordinate party who is thus placed, or may be placed, in the relation of a debtor to his proper master, must stand convicted, in that capacity, of unquestionable inability to discharge his own debt; and therefore must either be obnoxious, without appeal, to the utmost severity of his master's justice, if he insists on the payment of the debt—or be obliged to his gratuitous kindness, his generosity, his forgiveness—if he is to be absolved by him from it.

The subordinate party, who in his relation of

debtor to a common master, has obtained the remission of his debt by an act of pure grace and favour; in his relation of creditor to a fellow-servant, must be laid thereby under a specific obligation, *a fortiori*, to deal with him on the same lenient and equitable terms; particularly where the nature of the case requires it, and there is no medium in this case, no more than in the former, between enforcing the debt, regardless of consequences, or freely forgiving it, and cancelling the obligation *in toto*: and his fellow-servant, who stands to him in the relation of his debtor, whatever be the magnitude of his debt, yet if it be only infinitely less than that of his creditor to their common master, having to do with one who has been freely forgiven a debt infinitely greater than his own, acquires a right to the same indulgent treatment, of which his creditor has experienced the benefit; especially where indulgence is rendered necessary by the same difficulty of satisfying the demands of justice, and the claim to it is enforced by the same appeal to mercy and forbearance, on which the very person whom his fellow-servant is supplicating, grounded his supplication, and recommended his petition to their common master, and obtained the remission of his own debt, just before.

Lastly, if this reciprocal lenity and forbearance in the exaction of each other's debts, are not observed between the subordinate parties, who besides their distinct personal relation of creditor and debtor, stand also in the common one of fellow-servants of the same master, they cannot reasonably or justly expect the forgiveness of their own debts by him; or if they have been forgiven them, should it come to his knowledge, or in any way be brought under

his personal cognizance and observation, that they have not been willing to deal with each other themselves, just in the same way that they have wished and besought him, and found him inclined to deal with them—they cannot expect their forgiveness to stand good. They may look for their master's recall of his own favour, and even for more rigour and severity from him, in consequence of their own demeanour to each other, than they would perhaps have experienced from the first, had no respite or indulgence of any kind been granted them.

Now it is certain from the words with which the parable concludes, “So shall my Father likewise, “who is in heaven, do unto you, unless ye forgive “from your hearts each *of you* his brother their “trespasses,” that our Saviour applied all this directly to his hearers; and it is evident from those with which it opens, “For this reason, the kingdom “of heaven is likened unto a certain king,” &c. that he meant to apply it to them as *Christians*, as persons interested in something which properly concerned the *kingdom of heaven*, in which none but Christians could be interested.

The kingdom of heaven is not a personal subject, on the one hand; nor is the king in particular, (though a personal subject,) but the matter and substance of the history in general, (which are not such a subject,) the thing to which it is compared, on the other. But when actions as such are the subjects of comparison with any thing else, they cannot be considered as so compared, in their parts or details, but in their whole or complex; nor simply in their whole or complex, but in either as collected in some one point, if any such there be, which con-

stitutes their *moral*, the result and effect of the whole.

If this be the case, a rule of judgment in reference to the kingdom of heaven, that is, to the Christian dispensation, is the object of comparison in the present instance, on one side ; and a rule of proceeding, illustrated by the transaction in the parable, is the object compared with it on the other : a rule of judgment still future and to come, in respect to the former, illustrated by a course of proceeding exemplified in the history of the past, according to the latter ; a rule of judgment to be observed and enforced by God, as the principal party in all the proceedings relating to the kingdom of heaven, answering to the rule of conduct observed by the king, as the principal party in the transaction of the parable ; a rule of judgment affecting Christians, as the subordinate parties in the one case, like the rule of proceeding which affected the two servants, as the subordinate parties in the parable ; a rule of judgment, according to which the estimation or treatment of Christians, in a certain respect, on the part of God, will be made to depend on their own estimation and treatment of each other, in the same.

It appears then, that by the principal personage in the parable, the supreme moral Governor himself is adumbrated, in his capacity of the future Judge of the Christian world ; and by the subordinate parties, Christians, as answerable sometime or other to his tribunal : and it is in unison with this construction, that the former is personally represented in the character of a king and a master, and the latter in that of his subjects and servants ; and consequently of fellow-subjects and fellow-servants with

respect to each other. But they are also described as standing in the relation of creditors and debtors ; the principal party in respect of one of his servants, and that servant in respect of some one of his fellow-servants. Now, according to the language of scripture, debts may be put for transgressions ; and the relation of creditor and debtor may stand for that of sinned against and sinning. In St. Matthew's account of the Lord's Prayer ^g, we are commanded to pray for the remission of our *debts* to God, on condition of remitting ourselves the *debts* of others to ourselves : and St. Luke ^h, in the parallel passage of his account, expresses himself nearly to the same effect. St. Paul too, enjoins the Romans to " owe no man any thing," which means to do no one any injury ; " but to love one another ⁱ." Into the origin of the metaphor, or why it is that sins or injuries may be called debts, we shall inquire by and by : but that the sense of the term in the present instance is equivalent to that of *trespasses*, appears from our Lord's declaration, subjoined to the parable itself.

The moral of the parable is, consequently, simply ethical and didactic, but in a Christian or evangelical sense ; setting forth the duty of the forgiveness of injuries by one Christian in behalf of another, upon the Christian principle of requiring the forgiveness of his own trespasses against God ; and illustrating by a case in point, the rule of proceeding which God will observe, in the estimation and treatment of the offences of Christians against him, as they shall be found to have observed, or not observed,

^g Matt. vi. 12.

^h Luke xi. 4. Harm. P. iv. 29.

ⁱ Chap. xiii. 8.

a certain rule of proceeding, in estimating and resenting the offences of their fellow Christians against themselves.

In order, then, to the further explanation of this moral, I propose to enter upon certain questions, which will both apply to what has been said already, and embrace whatsoever may still require to be said, in reference to the same subject. These questions are, first, the doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries in general; secondly, the limits, conditions, or extent of its application; thirdly, the peculiar sanction by which it is enforced; lastly, some general reflections and observations, affecting any of these points, or connected with the moral of the parable.

THE APPLICATION.

Trypho the Jew, in his Dialogue with Justin Martyr, tells him that he had studied the precepts contained in what was called *the gospel*; and while he could not but admire them, they appeared to him too sublime and wonderful for any to observe, and therefore to have been intended for practice^k. That the testimony which these words conveyed to the dignity and excellence of the gospel morality, was no more than due, every one will allow; that the inference drawn from such properties—that its precepts were rather to be admired than obeyed, and more to be revered than applied in practice—was just and reasonable, may very well admit of a question.

If the author of the moral code, which Christians receive and acknowledge, was the supreme moral Governor himself, it was not to be expected that in fixing the standard of perfection, such a legislator

^k Justin Martyr, Dialog. 156. 2—8.

would be satisfied with any degree of moral excellence, that was not consistent with the infinite purity, goodness, and holiness of his own nature. Nor with respect to the measure of obedience, or the point of attainment in the abstract, which such a moral ruler as God must be pleased to appoint, for his own approbation and satisfaction, is it to be supposed it would make any difference for what class of his creatures, or what description of subjects, capable only of a moral submission, and responsible to their Maker for their obedience to his will, the rule of their duty, and the measure of their required perfection, was proposed; whether they were capable of coming up to the standard, and realizing the perfection, expected from them, or not. It may be justly presumed that no part of the rational creation, however superior to the human, could ever be competent to arrive at this abstract point of excellence; because under no circumstances can the perfection of the creature ever come up to the excellency of the Creator; and it is certain that so frail and imperfect a part of the rational creation as mankind, by the law of its nature at present, is utterly disqualified from attaining to it, or coming within any but an immeasurable distance, of infinite purity and goodness. Were it required from mankind, therefore, as the only condition of satisfying the expectations, and obtaining the favour, of the supreme moral Governor, that he should actually come up to the standard proposed; the task of his obedience would be truly hopeless; the moral laws of the gospel would be truly so many practical impossibilities. But such is not the case; nor is the condition of man's acceptance with his Maker, placed upon such a discourag-

ing, not to say unreasonable, footing. We are commanded to *aspire* at the standard of the divine excellence—but we are not required actually to *come up* to it ; we are expected to aim at perfection, even the perfection of the Creator himself, but we are not expected to be perfect ; much less to be perfect as the Creator himself—if we would please God.

That the morality of the gospel then, might appear to a Jew trained in the school of the rabbis, or to a Gentile acquainted only with the moral philosophy of Greece or Rome, to contain many things seemingly new and unheard of ; many things hard and difficult ; and some even impossible to be literally obeyed and practised : was a very probable case. And yet after all the morality of the gospel might not propose any thing, absolutely new. It has been well observed, that discoveries in ethics are not like discoveries in physics or mathematics. The laws of nature and the truths of science, may remain for any length of time unknown ; and whensoever they are brought to light at last, they are neither intuitively to be acknowledged, nor spontaneously to be embraced. But the moral principles which concern our religious, our social, and personal relations and duties, are so many instincts of conscience ; and when just and true, carry in themselves their own sanction and recommendation. If our moral sense does not suggest such truths, yet it confirms and approves of them spontaneously, when suggested. No new fact, then, strictly speaking, is capable of being brought to light in morality, resembling those properties of matter, or laws of the external world, of which an infinite variety have been already discovered by the researches of science, and as many

more, for any thing we can conceive to the contrary, may be discovered still. Whatever is right in matters of practical obligation, is agreeable to our moral constitution, and when properly represented to our moral sense, will be intuitively recognised by it. All accessions to the knowledge and conviction of moral agents in such cases, we may say with Socrates, are but reminiscences: in hearing such truths proposed for the first time, we seem to be reminded of what we knew before; in giving our assent to them, we seem to be assenting to old and familiar propositions; and so sanctioned and recommended by the suffrage of conscience, when any new truth of this kind is laid before us, the wonder is, not that it has been proposed at last, but that it should not have been thought of sooner.

What precepts of the gospel they were, which appeared to Trypho to possess so singular and difficult a moral character, he does not specify. But had he been called on to mention the instances, to which his remark was more particularly applicable, it is probable that he would have selected as among the most characteristic of gospel ethics, the most repugnant to natural inclinations, the most unheard and unthought of in theory, and the most difficult to realize in practice—the duties of poverty of spirit—of purity of heart—and of passive forbearance under injuries and provocations.

As there is nothing in morals truly good and unexceptionable, which as soon as proposed to the moral sense will not be instinctively recognised by it; so there is scarcely any thing of that kind, which can strictly be said to be promulgated, even in the gospel, actually for the first time—no glimpse, no

vestige, no idea or perception of which can be shewn to have occurred to the minds and consciences of men, until it was prominently brought forward, and directly inculcated by Christianity. What then, we may ask, has the morality of the gospel effected, even in these cases, more than the philosophy of Greece or Rome; to enlighten mankind with the better knowledge of their duty, or to encourage them to the better observance of it?

If it did not reveal a new principle of duty in every instance, it supplied a new motive for its observance in practice; it placed its obligation on a newer, a firmer, and more substantial footing; it rendered its authority indisputable, it gave it a power over the conscience of the observer, which it never before possessed. If it did not inculcate every article of duty for the first time, it cleared up obscurities which hung over questions of practice; it satisfied doubts on supposed obligations, which had always been reasonably entertained; it silenced objections to such and such duties, which had never been fully replied to; it interposed a final judgment between opposite opinions and conflicting lines of conduct, each of them supported by vouchers, that gave them authority with the world at large, and confirmed by reasons, that seemed satisfactory to the inquiring and reflecting few.

The moral systems of ancient philosophy more particularly wanted such sanctions—though human reason, until assisted by the light of revelation, was never able clearly to discover in what they consisted, nor until encouraged by the authority of the gospel, was ever emboldened to propose them; sanctions, which brought even acknowledged, and much

more questionable, duties, more home than ever to the common sense and conviction of moral agents; sanctions, which spoke intelligibly to the meanest capacities, and could be felt and appreciated at once, as reasonable, just, and true, by the great bulk of mankind, who require to be directed in matters of practice, by instinct and conscience, much more than by reason and argument.

The doctrine that the forgiveness of injuries is a duty—when simply so stated, and merely as regards the definition of the duty, the matter or instance of the observance in practice—is not peculiar to Christian ethics. The same doctrine was certainly inculcated by the moral teachers of Greece or Rome. Yet it is a doctrine which is justly considered a distinctive characteristic of gospel morality. In what respects, then, can that doctrine be peculiarly characteristic of the gospel, which is not altogether confined to it? In two respects more particularly, we may reply. First, in removing all doubt and hesitation concerning the morality of the duty itself, on which the opinions of pagan moralists, to say the least of them, were equally divided; and secondly, in having grounded its obligation on a sanction peculiarly its own; a sanction, no where to be found except in the pages of an inspired morality, not even in the writings of those philosophers, who most strongly maintained the abstract obligation of the duty, who were impressed with the liveliest sense of its practical benefits, and most disposed to admire its intrinsic excellence. To have prescribed as a duty of unquestionable necessity, what was not considered unquestionable before; and to have recommended by a motive of unquestionable

authority, what had never been enforced by an irresistible sanction before; was sufficient to render the doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries, as made binding by the gospel on the consciences of Christians, a doctrine peculiar to it.

We find Celsus, as quoted by Origen, objecting to the doctrine, considered in this peculiar relation to the morality of Christianity, that it was nothing new; that it had been taught by Socrates and Plato, long before the time of Jesus¹. We need not be concerned by this objection; nor think it incumbent upon us to vindicate the originality of the gospel code in this instance, by denying the fact asserted. The question is not, by whom was the doctrine of forgiveness first taught in any shape; but by whom was it first taught in such a shape, as no longer to be controvertible in theory, no longer of doubtful obligation in practice. Mankind were not differently constituted in the time of Socrates, and in that of Jesus; that a rule of duty which applied to their personal or social obligations at one of those periods, should not apply to them also at the other: nor did it require the light of revelation to enable the reason of a philosopher and moralist anciently, to see the mischievous tendencies of unrestrained anger, revenge, retaliation, in those effects upon the peace and happiness of society, which are the natural consequences of the presumed moral fitness of resenting and returning injuries to any extent; nor how desirable it was to guard against such tendencies beforehand, by enforcing the conviction of the contrary duty of forbearance and forgiveness.

Yet what is the principle on which, in the very

¹ i. 735. *Contra Celsum*, vii. 58.

passage produced by Celsus, Plato supposes Socrates to prohibit the resentment of injuries? The general and abstract proposition, ὅτι οὐδαμῶς δεῖ ἀδικεῖν: no act of injustice is ever, or under any circumstances, to be committed. The truth of such a proposition no one can dispute. But to commit an act of injustice, and to repel an act of aggression, are very different things. It is contrary to our natural sense of right and wrong voluntarily to commit an injury; but it does not appear to be so, to resent an unprovoked aggression, to defend ourselves against an attack.

We must not injure any one, says Socrates; therefore we must not return evil for evil; because that would be to injure. Now this reasoning is false; and the falsehood lies in attaching to the same word, "to injure," a double sense. In the first instance it means to do no *evil* to another of our own accord—in the second, to do him no *harm* of any kind. All injuring, as such, implies the idea of doing some evil voluntarily to another; but evil which is not provoked, and evil which is not deserved: resentment or retaliation certainly does *harm* to its object, but harm which has been provoked—harm which appears to be deserved. In order to evade this distinction, Socrates assumes as true a proposition which is manifestly not so: that "to do evil to men in any way, differs in no respect from doing an unjust thing." Such an assertion cannot be maintained without the assumption of the very point at issue, which is, whether doing harm to men under any circumstances, is actually doing an unjust thing. No good man will voluntarily do an act of injustice; nor therefore, voluntarily do an injury:

but for any thing which has yet been said to the contrary, it is still open to a question, whether, if provoked by an unjust aggression, even a good man may not resent and retaliate the wrong.

Seneca reasons no better on the same topic, when he would enforce the duty of non-resentment by arguments, instead of being content to rest its obligation on the *ipse dixit* of mere authority. “A great mind,” says he, “which estimates its own worth and dignity aright, is incapable of resenting, because it is incapable of receiving or feeling, an injury. As missiles rebound from an hard object, and blows which are levelled at solid bodies, give pain only to the striker, so does no injury bring a great mind to the sense of itself—more liable to yield than its object. How much more glorious is it, to disdain all injuries and insults, like one whom no weapon that is cast at him, can penetrate. Revenge is a confession of pain: it is no great mind that an injury makes to stoop. Either one more powerful, or one weaker than thou art, hath done thee the mischief. If one weaker, spare him; if one more powerful, spare thyself^m.”

The greatness of soul, displayed in the forgiveness of injuries, is placed on a very extraordinary footing, if it is based on insensibility—if it is due to the absence of the fact, or the incapacity of the fact, of feeling the injury itself; if it supposes the most perfect and sublime of characters to be no better than a stock or a stone. Can any one, whether great or little of soul, whether above or below the ordinary level of perfection, resent what he cannot feel? or can there be merit or virtue in forgiving what

^m De Ira, iii. v. 6.

has never been felt? Besides, it is a paradox to maintain that if the wise man is capable of suffering from an injury, he is not capable of feeling it: at least it is a distinction between suffering and feeling, much too subtle and refined for the comprehension of the world at large; who measure the nature and qualities of actions by their effects, and consider an injury not to have been felt, only where no evil consequence has been suffered from it. If the duty of forgiveness is to be inculcated in theory and enforced in practice, on a large scale, it must be by some motive which will weigh not with one or two, but with all; not with those who are capable of being influenced by refined and peculiar considerations, but with the great mass of mankind, who can judge of nothing in the abstract, and will be determined by nothing in practice, which does not apply directly to their own case; and come home to their own common sense and feeling.

Maximus Tyrius, another philosopher of the Stoical school, discusses the question, εἰ τὸν ἀδικήσαντα ἀνταδικητέον, “whether an injury received is to be “returned,” in one of his dissertations, at great lengthⁿ; but supplies no argument against the unlimited resentment of injuries, of universal application and corresponding force, to make it personal to all, and to compel its observance by all. At one time he maintains the old paradox, that a good man cannot be injured, and consequently can have nothing to resent, nor, as we may also add, to forgive: at another, he confounds, with Plato, the returning of an injury, with the original unprovoked commission of a wrong; at another, he argues as follows:

ⁿ Diss. xviii.

“ In a word, if to injure is a wicked thing, to injure
 “ again is as bad. For he who injures another has
 “ no advantage on the score of wickedness, by hav-
 “ ing begun—but he who injures again, by retali-
 “ ating, puts himself upon an equality with him, on
 “ the score of depravity. Nay even, if he who in-
 “ jures another does evil, he who does him evil in
 “ return, does evil nevertheless, though it be in re-
 “ taliation. For as he who returns a favour to him
 “ who began the obligation, nevertheless does good,
 “ though he may have had good done him before ; so
 “ he who changes the mode of the return to the
 “ effect of harming, nevertheless does evil, though
 “ he may have had evil done him before.”

It is very certain, that whosoever returns evil for evil, so far does harm ; but it is not so certain, whether he has not a right to do so—whether the harm which is suffered, is not deserved by its subject. The world at large will never be persuaded that the aggressor in an injury has not a greater share of the responsibility of its consequences, than the retaliator ; nor will common sense allow that the returning evil for evil is in any thing, but the mere accidental agreement of the effect, the same as the doing of evil unprovoked. The latter is a crime ; the former seems an act of justice. Nor is the case which is cited as parallel, by the concluding sentence, any thing to the purpose, or less exceptionable than the position which it is intended to illustrate. One who returns a benefit, does not do good in any such sense, as he who confers one. Gratitude is not liberality ; the paying of a debt is not the making of a present : and in like manner neither is revenge aggression ; nor is retaliation provocation. Such dis-

suasives from the resentment of injuries as these, are mere paradoxes and paralogisms; which would satisfy the reason of no one, nor withhold the fury of any one, not even of the wise man when provoked by an unjust attack, from seeking the gratification of its natural impulse, in the retaliation of the wrong itself.

Another of the arguments of Maximus is, that once allow the right of the resentment of injuries, and there will be no end of retaliation. An injury provokes a return; that return another; and so on. This argument may have weight in the abstract, and if we look only to general possible consequences; but it will be of little avail in the particular case, or with reference to the possible consequences of the particular act. It applies to the collective effect of the unrestrained prosecution of injuries, on the peace and welfare of society: not to the individual evil which may possibly redound in a single instance, from the resentment of a special and private wrong. Now as each man is but an individual of a much larger number—a mere infinitesimal in comparison of all mankind—he will be apt to imagine, if he reflects at all on the possible consequences of an act of retaliation on his part, before he commits it, that the resentment of his individual wrongs cannot be prejudicial to the general happiness of society, except in the same minute and incalculable proportion. Besides, if he thinks he has a clear right to redress in his particular instance, he will think himself justified in pursuing after and asserting the right, without regard to ulterior consequences. Nobody sees these consequences at the time, because they are yet distant and contingent: therefore nobody stops, under

the direct influence of anger and irritated feelings, to think of them beforehand, and to calculate all their amount. Nor is it a necessary consequence that such effects will ensue. The resentment of an original act of provocation does not necessarily lead to a new one. The resentment and punishment of an injury, as soon as committed, it may be said, have a direct tendency to prevent its repetition; by teaching those who might be disposed to become, or persist in being, the aggressors, that they must not expect to do so, without suffering for it. Retaliation, in this point of view, it might be said, is necessary to support the peace and good order of society. It is thus that legal punishments operate as warnings against and discouragements from, as well as penalties for, the commission of crimes: and between private revenge and criminal justice, there is apparently no other difference than this, that the one takes the redress of its wrongs into its own hands, and proceeds by a method of its own appointment; the other, both in what it resents and in the manner of resenting it and procuring redress for it, acts according to a prescribed form, after the process and subject to the directions ordained by the civil authority. In either case the effect is the same—that evil is returned for evil; that an unjust act of violence and aggression of a certain kind, is rebutted by an act which is, or professes to be, an opposite though well-deserved act of violence and retaliation in return.

But the greatest paradox of all that Maximus Tyrius maintains, is this: that if there can be, *ἀδικίας πρὸς ἀδικίαν ὑπερβολή*, “if one criminal’s guilt can be “greater than another’s,” *ὁ τιμωρῶν τοῦ προυπάρξαντος ἀδι-*

κώτερος, “ he who resents an injury, is really more to “ blame than he who committed it.” It would be difficult to convince common sense of this, and especially by such arguments as he proceeds to subjoin.

“ The aggressor in an injury,” says he, “ has his “ reward in the infamy of the deed : he, who resents “ it, being not less injurious, divides the infamy “ with him ; or rather takes it away from him—If “ you wrestle with a chimney sweeper, you must “ soil your clothes or your person, with the dirt “ contracted from him—It is an ill assorted match, “ when the good man enters the list against the bad “ man, to fight him with his own weapons”—and the like.

But common sense would reply, there cannot be more disgrace in merely resenting an injury, than in committing one unprovoked. Injustice is criminal and infamous both ; justice is praiseworthy and meritorious. If you wrestle even with a chimney sweeper, you cannot be rendered dirtier than your adversary ; nor contract more filth on your own person, than he carries about him upon his. Nor is to return an injury so gratuitous a piece of wickedness, as to commit one ; nor does the returning of an injury seek to undo the effects of it, in behalf of the sufferer, but to exact, if possible, an equivalent for them, in certain corresponding effects on the doer. Nor will common sense plead guilty to the charge, that in meeting evil by evil, in returning an injury which has just been experienced without provocation, on the head of its author, though you may have to contend with an unjust or unprincipled man, you are fighting him with his own weapons : especially, if those weapons are such as Maximus

supposes, “treachery,” “cunning,” “deceit.” There is an unlawful as well as a lawful mode of resenting even an injury, of prosecuting even a right; and though an unscrupulous morality might say of such cases, as well as of war, “*Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?*” yet doubtless no good man will resent even the wickedness of others against himself except by justifiable means. And if any means for the resentment or retaliation of injuries are justifiable; why then injuries, subject to this limitation, may be resented, and he who resents them may still be a good man, and just.

With Juvenal, in like manner, the retaliation of injuries is forbidden, because it is weak and womanish, and unworthy of a strong, masculine, spirit.

Revenge! great minds the unworthy thought control;

'Tis meanness, weakness, narrowness of soul!

What proves it most? None more than woman spites—

None more than woman in revenge delights.

xiii. 189—192.

Yet anger, he allows, is the most headstrong and impetuous of passions: revenge is a blessing dearer than life itself:

If one blood drop will soothe thy bosom's pain,

Why spare to shed! let those, that will, complain.

If sweet the zest—not life itself so sweet—

That vengeance yields, why spare thyself the treat!

Can it be weak and womanish then, to yield to the most violent of passions? what must it be, in that case, not to withstand the milder and more insidious ones? Surely the just inference is the other way: that it is more excusable to succumb to the impulse of anger, to give way to the temptation of revenge, than to the force of any other criminal

emotion, the blandishments of any other forbidden gratification; and that if women are more prone to be overcome by these emotions than men, it is because they are less able to oppose an adequate resistance to the strength and violence of their common passions, than men; and so far are more to be pitied, than blamed and stigmatized, for their weakness.

Nor has Juvenal any thing to object to this natural thirst of revenge, and the supposed idea of its sweetness, but authority and example.

Fools reason thus, whose tempers prone to ire,
Burn unprovoked, or want but sparks to fire.
No wrong too slight, for anger's scornful mood,
No means too worthless, where revenge is wooed.
Not so Chrysippus, and mild Thales taught,
Not so the sage of sweet Hymettus thought;
Who midst dire chains the deadly potion quaffed,
Nor with th' accuser would have shared the draught.

But I am not a Chrysippus, nor a Thales, nor a Socrates, might be the reply, but a common man, one "of the many:" nor am I blessed with that *mite ingenium*, that meekness of temper, which rendered them impervious to the sense of wrong, or enabled them to stifle the impulse of resentment, as soon as conceived; or rather made them incapable of seeking to revenge what, in fact, from the calmness and placidity of their temperament, either they did not feel, or not to the extent that another would have done. I am one of those whose constitution is of a more bilious and inflammatory turn, more apt to resent than to forgive. And in yielding to the impulse of my feelings under the sense of wrongs and insults, I seem to be obeying the voice of nature within me, and following where she leads the way.

There can be no doubt that this *mite ingenium*, this natural suavity of disposition and mildness of temper, or as some might call it, this more phlegmatic turn of feeling, had much to do in influencing the different opinions and practice of people, concerning the obligation of the duty in question, and the morality of its observance, in former times; whether they were philosophers or common men. The most remarkable examples of patience under provocations, which the annals of heathen morality would enable us to produce, are those of persons eminently endowed with this gift of nature; as Thales, Pericles, Socrates, Euclides, Phocion, &c.^o

If the reasonings of the moralists of antiquity, who inculcate the duty of the forgiveness of injuries, whenever they labour to support it by abstract considerations, and force of argument, were all to be analyzed in detail, there is no doubt that they would be found as weak and inconclusive, as those which I have cited and endeavoured to refute. It is very certain, however, that they were not unanimous on the question of the practical obligation of the duty itself; and that just as great names, and as splendid authorities, may be produced from antiquity, to recommend the duty of resentment under injuries, and of returning evil for evil, as in behalf of the contrary doctrine. On this subject, “philosophers have left us without directions,” says Lactantius^p; that is, so far as the Christian duty of forgiveness was concerned, philosophers were quite unagreed; the world at large were left without principles of duty, or rules

^o Cf. Basil, i. 577. B.—D. Hom. xxiv. De Legendis Libb. Gentilium.

^p Lib. vi. 10. 533.

of conduct : “ insomuch as deceived by an appearance
“ of virtue, without the reality, they have taken pity
“ away from the constitution of man, and while they
“ wish to cure the vices, have increased them.” In
this principle, indeed, almost every sect was agreed,
however much they might differ besides : that for
the gradual improvement and ultimate perfection of
human nature, they must begin with relieving it
from the weaknesses which tarnished, as well as
from the vices which debased and deformed, its na-
tive lustre, beauty, and dignity : of which number
they reckoned pity to be one⁹. But the natural
emotion of pity, mixed with another consideration
which gives it a personal force and cogency, that it
would not otherwise have, is the foundation of the
Christian impulse to forgive the injuries, the forgive-
ness of which is required by the injurer himself.

The school of Pythagoras placed the essence of
criminal justice, if not of justice absolutely, in the
ἀντιπεποιθὸς ἄλλω, “ the returning of like for like ;”
which sanctions by implication the private right of

⁹ I am not aware that Aristotle’s famous definition of the
final end of tragedy—that it produces by means of pity and fear
the *κάθαρσις*, the purging away (from our moral system) *τῶν
τοιούτων παθημάτων*, that is, of all such passive emotions—and
by so purging them totally from our moral constitution, renders
us completely incapable of them—has ever been explained on
this principle—that even such emotions as pity were weak-
nesses, evils, infirmities, imperfections, as much as that of fear—
and the doing away of the susceptibility of the one was just as
desirable in itself, and as indispensable to the natural dignity,
excellence, independence, of a being like man—as that of the
other. Pity is ultimately resolvable into fear ; but he that is
capable of fear is not yet perfect, *ἀντάρκης* or *τέλειος*. Therefore,
neither he that is capable of pity. But to this subject justice
cannot be done at present.

seeking the redress of an injury, by retaliating it upon the injurer.

Just were the doom, that like for like decreed,
And made the doer suffer his own deed.

Aristot. Eth. v. v. 1.

We find it frequently assumed as a self-evident principle of conduct; as an axiom of natural justice; that it was as much a matter of duty, and as much the part of virtue, to return evil for evil, as good for good: that is to say, that revenge was just as binding on moral and responsible agents, as gratitude. A sentiment like this is ascribed even to Socrates, in his reply to the invitation of Archelaus of Macedonia^r; which proves that his teaching about the resentment of injuries, was not always consistent with itself; and that he sometimes spoke in the language of common men concerning it.

Aristotle will scarcely allow to *πραότης* or meekness, the name and obligation of a mean habit, or virtue^s. He admits that anger, which is roused in the first instance, by a real or a supposed affront, in instigating to the desire of revenge reasons right from false principles. It assumes that an insult has been received; and therefore infers that it ought to be resented. Admit the premises, says Aristotle, and the conclusion would be just; which is to allow that injuries, when actually received, may be, and even ought to be, resented^t.

Cicero has this sentiment in his *Officia*^u: “Nor, however, are they to be listened to, who think that our anger towards enemies should be deep and inveterate; and would pronounce that the part of a magnanimous and brave man.” Whence, as he pro-

^r Aristotle's Rhetoric, lib. ii. 23. 8.

^s Ethics, iv. v.

^t Ibid. vii. vi.

^u I. xxv.

hibits only the immoderate, deep, and inveterate degree of the emotion in question, it follows that he did not disapprove of it in moderation. He observes again^u: “But indeed, were any one to unravel that complicated idea of the character, which his mind has formed, he may readily convince himself that a good man is he, who does good to whom he can, and harm to none, unless first provoked by an injury.” On which Lactantius breaks out into this exclamation^x: “O what a sentiment, and containing nothing but truth, did he spoil by the addition of two words! What occasion was there to add, ‘unless first provoked by an injury?’ to make vice an appendage of the good man, like a most ugly tail, and to render him devoid of patience, the greatest of all virtues.”

There is little doubt that the popular opinion concerning the obligation of the duty, and the popular practice in resenting or forgiving injuries, are most faithfully represented in such sentiments as these which follow, from Hesiod, Theognis, Euripides, and others: the great masters of popular ethics, out of whose writings, rules and maxims, in the shape of *γνώμαι* or moral sentences, applicable to the various contingencies of social conduct, used to be derived.

Let not companions with thy kinsmen vie,
Nor friends divide a brother's sympathy.
If else, beware thou do thy comrade wrong,
Nor break thy faith, through impotence of tongue.
If first, by word or work, he give thee pain,
Be sure to pay him twice as much again.

Hesiod. Works and Days, 705—709. Cf. 321, 322.

^u III. xix.

^x VI. 18. 560.

Caress thy foe, and speak him soft and fair,
 While round his head thou weavest the fatal snare :
 Then seize the moment, glut thy vengeance well,
 Let nought divert thee from thy purpose fell.

Theognis, 363, 364.

May heaven, wide heaven, our old forefathers' dread,
 Rush from its brasen vault, and crush this head ;
 If good or ill from me no like regain,
 My friend no blessing, and my foe no bane.

Ibid. 867—870.

The harm my friend I mean, be mine to rue,
 His, doubly told, the ill that he would do.

Ibid. 1085, 1086. Cf. 337—350.

Be mine to prove

Grateful to friends, with just returns of love :
 Wolf-like, my foe to quest, with cautious bound,
 Tread here and there, and wind the insidious round.

Pindar, Pythia, ii. 153.

Theophilus, ad Autolycum^y, quotes from Euripides,

'Tis just, thy foe, where'er thou findest, to harm.

And again,

I deem it manly, on an enemy
 To wreak my spite^z.

And from Archilochus,

One thing I know, one art my boast I make—
 On mine aggressor dire revenge to take^a.

A doctrine, on which the authority of the teachers of morality anciently, was so equally divided, cannot, perhaps, in strictness be said to have been discoverable by the mere light of human reason ; no more than a variety of other truths, on which, until all doubts were set at rest by the assurances of the

^y II. 53.

^z Cf. Euripides, *Andromache*, 439.

^a Cf. Thucyd. iii. 38. sqq. iii. 82—84 : Ovidii *Ibis*, 29—42.

gospel, the same difference of opinion prevailed; as the immortality of the soul; a future state of reward and punishment; the origin of the material universe; the being and nature of God himself. In estimating too, the amount of the arguments on either side, so far as the obligation or non-obligation of the duty is supported by reasoning merely, an impartial judge might be disposed to decide, that the advantage was rather with those who maintained the lawfulness of the resentment of injuries, and its consistency with virtue and duty. The example of criminal justice—which enforces a particular species of redress according to a particular method; and the acknowledged obligation of gratitude, the unquestionable duty of returning good for good—so far as human reason can see, supply an argument not easily to be answered, in proving the right of resenting injuries in general, and the parallel duty or obligation of returning evil for evil. It is to be observed also, that the morality of antiquity on this point, aimed only at restraining the external act. It did not pretend to regulate the internal feeling. It inculcated forbearance under injuries, but it did not prescribe forgiveness. Anger, resentment, malice, and hatred, would seem to be perfectly consistent with the view which it took of the principle of the obligation, and the extent to which it would enforce its observance, provided they were still prevented from breaking out into acts of violence. As to the duty of forgiveness, as well as forbearance; as to the question, not merely of refraining from acts of retaliation, but of suppressing the desire of revenge itself—it does not appear that the moralists of old ever formed so sublime an idea of

the principle of the duty in theory, or ever thought of carrying so far as that, the extent of its application in practice. Many of them taught that a good man could not, and would not, return evil for evil; but which of them taught that he must, and would, return good for evil? which of them taught, that though he could not consistently with his character, revenge himself on one who had lost his favour by an unjust aggression, he might not, without offence to his virtue, regard him with different feelings from before? that while he forbore to resent an injury, he was bound also to forget it; that though he would not punish its author on account of it, he would not think otherwise of him, and behave otherwise towards him ever after, than if he had never done any thing to offend him.

We see then, with respect to the admission and practice of the duty of forgiveness, notwithstanding all that the philosophers of antiquity were able to say in its behalf, upon what point there was still a desideratum; viz. not as to an ignorance of the duty, which would have required an original revelation of it, but as to the existence of a motive, sufficiently strong to compel and enforce its observance. Till this desideratum should be supplied, the duty itself would always be liable to be denied or disputed. While the true principle of its obligation was still unassigned, it might still be reasonably doubted whether it possessed an obligation at all. In forgiving an injury, no man could persuade himself that he was allowing a right, and not merely granting a favour; that he was not entitled to redress, and might not if he pleased insist on it; that he was not, at the utmost, only pardoning an offender, not acquitting an innocent

person. We may conceive, indeed, what degree of influence such persuasives to the duty of forgiveness, as philosophers were able to address to the world at large, would exert in determining their practice; when even the powerful and convincing motives, supplied by the gospel, have nevertheless produced so little general effect; not because in their own nature they are destitute of strength and cogency, but because they have had to contend with almost insuperable obstacles, which the pride, the prejudices, the passions of mankind, never fail to suggest, whensoever they are called upon to *practise* the duty, of which nevertheless they *approve*.

The doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries is, in fact, opposed by the strongest antipathies of our nature. A man has only to turn his eyes on himself, to be convinced how much more agreeable to his inclination it would be to resent and revenge an injury, than to forgive and forget it: and he has but to look abroad, to be satisfied that others are constituted, in this respect, like himself. There may be a natural coldness of temperament in some, which renders them less easy to be provoked; and a natural suavity of disposition in others, which makes them more placable and inclined to forgive: but the generality of mankind are much more remarkable for a proneness to take offence at the slightest provocations, than for an indifference to serious aggressions; and for a tendency to be extreme and immoderate in the measures of their satisfaction, than to be content and resigned under no satisfaction at all. If the instincts of a corrupt nature shew themselves most plainly, where they are under the least disguise from the artificial refinements of

education, and are subject to the least restraint from the customs of civilized society—the heart of the savage may not consist of different elements from that of the philosopher; but the savage will give free scope to those passions, which the philosopher is taught to curb and suppress: the moral nakedness of the savage will be displayed with as little reserve as his bodily nakedness itself; which every where, but in the haunts of barbarous life, is screened by the decent furniture of clothing. Nor is any impulse of a common nature more strongly felt, or more impetuously indulged among savages, than that of revenge—under the idea of real or imaginary wrongs.

The doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries is peculiar to the gospel in another respect; viz. as not being inculcated, or at least so distinctly and pointedly inculcated, among the other practical duties of the elder dispensation. I do not mean to say, that no traces of such a doctrine are to be met with in the law of Moses; (for what is the good work or duty, incumbent on Christians themselves—of which the first germ and principle are not discoverable also in the law?) but simply that it is not so earnestly, prominently, and emphatically insisted on, in the law, as it is in the gospel; nor is any such reason assigned for its observance, in the law, as in the gospel. Some of the requisitions, indeed, of the law, might appear to inculcate, or by a little ingenuity might easily be perverted to inculcate, a duty the very reverse of forgiveness. Nor is it improbable that the same misconstruction of the text of the law, and the same dexterity in wresting or explaining away its injunctions, had been exerted by the

teachers of the people in our Saviour's time, to justify the resentment of injuries, as to defend the non-observance of other moral duties, though contrary to the letter of scripture, of which they made no scruple ^b.

If, however, we comprehend under the name of the law, the whole of the scriptures of the Old Testament, from Moses to the last of the prophets; there are some moral duties to be found in it, of a character more strictly evangelical than others, the first teaching of which seems to have been reserved for the prophets, in the discharge of their personal ministry, as authorized expositors of the will of God not less than Moses. There is no passage in the Pentateuch itself, so express to the doctrine of the forgiveness of injuries, as this, which St. Paul has quoted from the book of Proverbs ^c, and by recommending to Christians, has shewn to inculcate a duty purely evangelical. "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink. For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee ^d."

As a part, and however characteristic a part, of the morality of Jesus Christ, the particular duty of forgiveness is a branch of the more general law of charity; peculiar also to the gospel. The first design, the proper effect, of that law is, that we our-

^b For example; a man, according to the distinctions made by the rabbis, would not be justified in killing his enemy himself, but he might suborn another to kill him; he might compass the same end by more roundabout, but equally certain, means.

^c Rom. xii. 20.

^d Prov. xxv. 21, 22.

selves do no evil to others; the next, and a natural consequence of the very disposition which enforces the law in its primary intention—that we resent as little as possible the evil which others do to us. Were the law of charity universally obeyed, there would be no necessity for the law of forgiveness: men would of their own accord abstain from injuring, or doing evil in any way to one another; and were no injuries to be committed, there could be none to be resented. And much better would it be for the happiness of the world in this life, if by the due observance of the law of charity on the one hand, the necessity of the law of forgiveness were superseded on the other. But if, in the present state of things, injuries, like offences, must needs come, and from various causes, and in various ways, be committed by one man against another; and if, when injuries have been committed, to whatever degree their resentment is freely permitted, to the same degree the harmony, peace, and welfare of social existence are necessarily endangered: the law of forgiveness steps in to repair the breach in the law of charity; applying the medicine to the extent of the wound inflicted; redressing the balance where it has been disturbed, and restoring harmony so far as it has been interrupted; and through its timely and salutary interference, averting the danger which threatened the perpetuity of social happiness, by renewing the same good understanding, and establishing the same unity and concord, among those who are living in common, as before.

“For whence arise strivings among men,” says Lactantius, “whence battles and contentions? except that impatience of provocation being opposed

“ to perverseness, ofttimes stirs up mighty tempests.
“ But if to perverseness you shall have opposed pa-
“ tience, than which nothing more truly deserves
“ the name of virtue, nothing is more worthy of
“ man; it will forthwith be quenched, just as if you
“ poured water over fire For this virtue only
“ brings it to pass, that no evil should take place;
“ and if it is given to all, there will be no wicked-
“ ness, no deceit in the intercourse of mankind.”
If injuries must both take place, and be resented as
often as they take place, there may be no end to
provocation and retaliation: the redress of one in-
jurious act may lay the foundation of a thousand
more. Quarrels and disputes might become inter-
minable; passing from one extreme to another, until
like fires which burned themselves out by the con-
sumption of their own materials, they ended in the
extermination of the parties concerned in them.

An injury begins, perhaps, between two persons: but unless its prosecution is suppressed at the birth, it rarely stops short with two; or rather, it is impossible that a quarrel can be pursued to any extremities between two persons, without implicating more in its progress; until at last a general neighbourhood, or an entire community, are involved in an indiscriminate blaze. Quarrels may descend like estates, from parents to their children: the dispute may continue as hot and as active as ever, when its original authors are no more; and its effects may be really and seriously felt, when the very recollection of the cause, out of which it arose, has died away, and no one can tell how or why it was first begun. All these interminable consequences of the

resentment of injuries might have been nipped in the bud, and all the possible future mischief arrested at the outset; if the same spirit of charity which would forbid the beginning of a quarrel, by the deliberate commission of a wrong, dissuaded also from persisting in it, when begun, or resenting with too much heat an injury, once committed. The most destructive fires are kindled by a spark, which a drop of water, timely applied, is sufficient to quench: but which the presence of combustible materials when close at hand, will soon inflame into a blaze and fury, beyond all resistance and control.

The obligation, too, of the duty of forgiveness, though not discoverable, as we have seen, by the light of mere human reason, yet when proposed to our understandings on its proper principle, as we have it declared in the gospel, cannot but command our instinctive acknowledgment as just and right, and as agreeable to human nature in that true view of its actual constitution, which revelation enables us to take. Of this peculiar sanction, we shall speak more particularly by and by. Supposing, however, the principle of the duty to be placed on no other ground than this—that if we expect or desire forgiveness of our own sins against God; we must be ready to forgive the offences of others against ourselves—can any requisition, we may ask, be more just and reasonable? and must not that principle of obligation be ultimately agreeable to the actual condition of moral agents at present, which takes it for granted that men will sin against the supreme moral Governor, and will have need to be forgiven their sins, if they do? in other words, which is founded in the fact of the original corruption, and natural depraved

tendencies of the human heart, as much as in that of men's moral responsibility itself; and takes it for granted that by virtue of what they are in themselves, they are just as much disqualified, as by virtue of what they are in respect of their Creator, they are bound and obliged, to render an absolute obedience to his will.

The reason, indeed, why the moralists of antiquity, even those who contended most for the abstract excellence, or practical necessity of this virtue, mistook so generally the true principle of its obligation, was, that either they were ignorant of the fact of this corruption, or if they could not shut their eyes to the evidence of its effects, they were too proud to confess so humiliating a truth as the incurable depravity of human nature; and foolishly imagined that the salve of their philosophy could apply an effectual remedy, to so deep rooted and wide spread a sore. Their comparative ignorance also of the divine nature itself, and of man's true relation to his Maker, doubtless contributed to the same mistake. The sublimest conception of the Deity which they were able to form, was still only of matter infinitely extended, infinitely purified and refined; nor between the soul of man, and the divinity itself, did they imagine any other difference than a merely numerical one, such as must still exist between a whole as such, and any one of its parts, however incommensurate with it—between an atom, for instance, and the universe; between a drop of water and the ocean. The universe itself is but a collection of atoms: the ocean is but a congeries of drops: and either of the latter is an integral part of the former, and substantially the same as the whole. Therefore so was the soul of man, part of the divine.

Of God, as a spiritual essence, in contradistinction to a material substance, they had no conception; and much less of God, as such a spirit whose most distinguishing attributes in respect of his creatures, are his moral ones, and such as directly apply to their own responsible relations—and directly affect the question of their personal, social, and religious duties of purity, holiness, justice, and truth.

Of man too, during the continuance of the present life, as standing in any other relation to the Deity, than that of a member detached from his body, and sometime to be united to it again—of an emanation temporarily derived from his essence, and sometime to be reabsorbed in it—they were just as ignorant. Between the soul of man and the divinity, they supposed both a physical and a moral sympathy, which even in their separate independent state, gave them a community of nature, and a capacity of uniting in one—and in their state of reunion and conjunction, would blend them indissolubly together, and render them no longer distinguishable from each other. The physical powers and properties of the divine nature, therefore, in their opinion, were shared by the human; the intellectual excellence, and the moral capacities of the human nature, were not less distinctive of the divine—each in their proper proportion, relatively to the other. If there was any difference between God as God, and men as men, in their estimation, it consisted in this; that God as God was made up of men as men; in that one individual being, called God, as God, every individual man, as man, was summed up and collected. The one being called God, then, as God was singly equivalent to the aggregate of individual beings, called men, as men—and therefore while

each individual man's essence was the same in kind as the essence of God, the essence of God as God, comprehended the essence of men as men—the powers, capacities, and properties of the divine nature, physical or moral, mere multiples of the powers, capacities, and properties, physical or moral, of the human—which resembled them in kind, and differed from them only in degree—as a corpuscle, though an infinitesimal part of the mass, partakes of its nature; as a spark is the same in kind as the fire; and a drop of water as the ocean.

Had the philosophers of old possessed upon such points as these, the same knowledge and certainty which Christian moralists enjoy; had they been aware of man's true position in the universe, and true spiritual relation to a spiritual Creator, on which his responsibility as a moral agent depends; had they known, as Christians know, the true nature of sin; and what effect its commission produces, in disturbing the relations between mankind and his Maker; and had they felt, as Christians have been made to feel, that man in his present infirm, because corrupt and degenerate, state, must needs commit sin—they were much too perspicacious and acute, not to have seen and taught, that as man will have a constant necessity of forgiveness from God, for offences which concern himself—which forgiveness he can obtain only on the condition of repentance and humiliation—he is under a constant obligation, even for his own sake, to forgive a penitent fellow-creature, who has offended him.

If, indeed, there were any one man, partaking really of human nature yet exempt from its original stain, the duty of forgiving those injuries, from the

commission of which against him by others, his perfection itself might not protect him, to be binding upon him must be placed on a different footing. The motive of our Saviour's forgiveness, regular and exemplary as it was, cannot be ascribed to the consciousness, that there was any thing for which he himself had need of forgiveness either from God or from man; but solely to the benevolence of his disposition; the abstract goodness and excellence of the virtue itself; and chiefly to the desire of setting an example of perfection to his followers, which they should be bound to imitate; an example, as proceeding from him and designed for such a purpose, possessing the force of the strongest argument.

Nor yet, in requiring the practice of the duty, must we suppose that the gospel requires impossibilities, or enjoins its observance, further than it is in our power to obey and act up to the injunction. It does not command us to become incapable of anger or resentment, in order that we may be able to forgive injuries; for such a requisition would be impossible, and the error of the Stoics of old. But it requires us to lay a restraint on these passions, and to prevent them from proceeding to extremities. Anger is not revenge, nor is resentment malice: but anger will stimulate to the desire of revenge; and resentment, if cherished for a length of time, will necessarily ripen into malice. We cannot perhaps experience an affront without being angry, nor suffer from the consequences of an injury without resenting them; and what we cannot help feeling, we are not responsible for feeling. But we may prevent even anger from overpowering reason; and we may curb the impulse of resentment before it has

taken effect in retaliation ; and what we are able to do, either of ourselves or with the aid of Divine grace, we are bound to attempt and perform. Our Saviour himself, when the officer of Caiaphas smote him on the face, expostulated with him for the blow ; which shews that he resented, though he did not retaliate the injury : and St. Paul, when commanded by the president of the sanhedrim to be smitten, as he conceived unjustly, rebuked even the president himself. We may be angry, (it is his own assurance to the Ephesians^f;) provided we *sin* not in our anger : but above all, we must not “ let the sun go down on our wrath.” Our anger must be a transient and temporary emotion, like a cloud which comes over the sun in a clear sky ; and after a moment’s obscuration of his light, leaves it as bright and serene as ever.

The difficulty of enforcing the duty, and acting up to the extent of its application, is after all exceeding great ; and as much as Christian charity and meekness, with all their helps and encouragements, can either attempt or achieve. It has many dissuasives and obstacles to encounter, both from within us, and from without us. It is repugnant to our pride and imaginary self-importance, which are always wounded by receiving an affront, and degraded in their own estimation, or in that of others ; especially if the affront is passed over unresented : to the impulse of anger, which is roused at once by the appearance of an insult done or intended to be done us, whether real or not ; to the desire of revenge—the most ardent in the appetite, and the most grateful in the indulgence, of all our bad

^f Chap. iv. 26.

passions. It is met by false shame, and condemned by the arbitrary laws of honour. It has prejudice, practice, example and authority, arrayed against it. The world takes part with and applauds, not the meek, the passive, the quiet, inoffensive spirit, which prefers to bear with an unprovoked aggression, rather than violate the bond of Christian charity by resenting and revenging it; but with the fiery, quick, and impatient in their sense of wrong; the fierce, the indomitable, and obstinate in their resolve on, and pursuit of redress. It calls the conduct of the one cowardice, poltroonery, pusillanimity; that of the other, manliness, courage, high spirit^g. It is as often against our interests, in a temporal point of view, to forgive an injury, as to submit to its effects from inability to procure redress; nay more, such is the deceivableness of our own hearts—there may arise occasions and emergencies, when to resent and revenge an injury shall appear as much a point of duty and conscience, as under other circumstances, to forgive one would have seemed. To persevere in the right course, amidst such obstacles, impediments, and discouragements, requires the strongest persuasion of the importance and necessity of the duty, the utmost conviction of the obligation of its principle, and the most Christian fortitude, as well as judgment and discretion, in reducing it to practice. The grace of God, which we must diligently supplicate for by constant and fervent prayer, can

^g Ita fit, ut homo justus contemptui sit omnibus. et quia putabitur semet ipsum defendere non posse, habebitur pro segni et inerti. qui autem fuerit ultus inimicum; hic fortis, hic strenuus judicatur; hunc colunt, hunc omnes verentur. Lactantius, Div. Inst. 18. 560. (*pot.* 565.)

alone give us both the will and the power never to deviate, under such circumstances, from the strict path of Christian duty.

With respect to the extent, conditions, or limitations of the duty, the second of the points which we proposed to consider, the first question is, What are we called upon to forgive, when an injury is required to be forgiven? According to the parable, this is a *debt*; and every debt supposes a debtor, every debtor a creditor. In like manner, every injury supposes an injurer, and every injurer, an injured party. But whether an injury may be called a debt, and therefore the author of an injury, a debtor, the sufferer by it, a creditor—remains to be yet considered.

A certain moral philosopher of antiquity, treating professedly of justice and injustice, calls the commission of an injury a *gain*, and the suffering of one, a *loss*^h; a form of expression which approximates to the gospel usage of representing injuries by debts, and the relation of doer and sufferer, with regard to them, by the relation of debtor and creditor.

A creditor, in the most general sense of the word, is one *to* whom something is due *from* another person; a debtor, in the same sense, is one *by* whom something is due *to* another person. To the existence of such a relation between the proper parties in it, it is not necessary that the thing owing *to* the one, and *from* the other, should be a sum of money. Whatever is justly due to one person from another, so far constitutes the one a debtor, the other a creditor, with respect to that particular thing. A child,

^h Aristot. *Ethica*, v.

in being bound to love, honour, and obey its parents, is so far a debtor to them ; and parents, in being obliged to educate, protect, and cherish their children, are so far indebted to their offspring.

The relation of debtor and creditor, then, may be only a metaphorical expression for the obligation of reciprocal rights. Every right, which is owed *by* one party, is due *to* another ; and every such right, as soon as the relation which entails it is established, renders one of the parties in the relation a debtor, and the other a creditor, with respect to the same thing.

It is a consequence also of the nature of reciprocal relations in general, and a characteristic principle of the relation of debtor and creditor in particular ; that the inferior party in any such relation, *by* whom the debt is due, can never exonerate himself from the obligation of the debt, against the will of the superior, *to* whom it is due. The inferior party in all such relations, is always at the mercy of the superior. If a creditor insists on his right, a debtor has no means of justly evading the demand, whatever it may cost him to pay it. Any man is at liberty to give up his own ; nobody but its owner, to dispose of what belongs to another. Any creditor therefore may forgive his debtor ; but the debtor cannot forgive himself. Such was the state of the case between the several parties concerned in the transaction in the parable. Both the subordinate persons, in their proper relation as debtors, were bound beforehand by an equal obligation to pay their respective debts, if the payment was rigidly insisted on ; and even the first of the two, who stood also in the relation of a creditor, was con-

sidered obliged to have acquitted his proper debtor from his personal obligation to himself, only because he had just been released from a much greater personal obligation of his own.

Now, as every injury is something unjustly done, and therefore unjustly suffered ; whensoever an injury has been done and suffered, the injured party becomes entitled—the injuring party becomes obliged—to some redress, reparation, satisfaction of the wrong itself. The injured party, then, acquires a right, and the injurious one contracts an obligation, in consequence of the same act ; a right to claim and receive redress on the one hand, an obligation to concede and make it on the other, for the same thing done and suffered. The relation of debtor and creditor is, consequently, so far established between them ; the party who has unjustly suffered the wrong, as entitled to some redress for it, representing the creditor ; and the party who has committed it, as bound to repair the consequences of his crime, denoting the debtor ; the redress itself, as the reparation of the injury, in whatsoever way it is to be effected, being represented by the payment of the debt. Under such circumstances, to forgive the debt, is to excuse the reparation of the injury ; to exact the debt, is to insist on its redress : and on the common principle of such obligations, though the injured party, if he pleases, may relinquish his claim, the injuring party (unless by full and entire reparation) cannot be discharged from his debt.

When, then, we are taught, as in the parable, to forgive *our* debts, meaning the debts that are due *to us* from others ; we are taught, in the first place,

to give up our right to redress for the injuries which have been committed against us; and therefore, to give up what we were before entitled to, and might, if we pleased, exact. We are taught, in the next place, not to desire, or expect, the reparation of injuries in general: and we are taught, in the last place, not to resent injuries at all. Injuries can be resented only for the sake, and in the hope of redress. Not to seek their redress then, is virtually not to resent them; and not to resent them, is not to feel them; and not to feel them, is so far to forgive them in the strictest sense of the word.

The forgiveness thus implied, is necessarily absolute and plenary. It is to change in some degree the nature of things, and to undo the past itself. An injury ceases to be an injury, when it ceases to be regarded as one; and it ceases to be regarded, when it ceases to be resented, as one; and it ceases to be resented as an injury, when it ceases to be prosecuted as such.

In giving up, however, the right to redress, we are called upon to give up that which was our own; which we might justly have required, if we pleased; which the offending party could not justly have withheld, if he would. We are called upon, therefore, to make strictly a *sacrifice*; to part with our own by an act of positive self-denial, and to serve God with that which "costs us something." The minor debt in the parable was justly due, as well as the greater; and the forgiveness of the minor was required to be gratuitous, like that of the greater; and therefore was as much a sacrifice, in its proper proportion, as the renunciation of the greater.

Nor, indeed, does it seem possible *freely* to for-

give an injury, the reparation of which is not at the time, within our reach. The consciousness that redress would be impossible, even if sought for, is often a reason why what would otherwise have been resented as an insult and outrage, is never resented at all. The absurdity of being angry with children, with irrational, or with inanimate objects, for injurious effects, however serious to ourselves, which have unwittingly or accidentally proceeded from them, is self-evident; and on the same principle, persons, very much inferior in comparison of others, in wealth or rank, will bear with many things from them, which they would have resented as the grossest indignities, had they been done to them by their equals, and much more by their inferiors. To the forgiveness of injuries, then, in the Christian sense of the duty, it seems absolutely necessary, that not only should their redress under any circumstances be lawful, but at the time when they are forgiven, and under the circumstances of the case, even possible, and within reach. Of course, no Christian would be called upon to forego the redress of an injury, were it unlawful even to desire or seek it; nor could the act of forbearance ever be a virtue, where the act of commission itself would be a crime. But not only must redress, to be insisted on, be lawful; but to be forgiven or dispensed with, it must be possible. If this is not the case, it cannot strictly speaking be even forgiven, and certainly not freely and unreservedly forgiven. Nor will there be either the same reluctance to the duty of forgiving, or the same merit in overcoming that reluctance, as there would be, under other circumstances. It is an easy sacrifice which requires no self-denial; which is made

of that which is not our own, or not in our power, not at our option, to withhold or bestow—to retain or relinquish—as we please.

And hence, it may be observed, the sacrifice incumbent on ourselves, as the sacrifice of our own due, is to all intents and purposes the same, whether the party in whose favour it is made (that is the offender) be conscious of his fault, and sorry on account of it, or not. But it is an inquiry of importance to the further decision of the question, how far we are bound to the forgiveness of injuries, in the Christian sense of the duty—whether the previous contrition and repentance of the injurer are not necessary to the exercise of the duty, and to the admission of its personal obligation on himself, by the injured person. The duty of forgiveness, preceded by the penitence of the offender, and the expression of his wish to be forgiven, may be absolute and peremptory—but is it so, under other circumstances?

Now there are a variety of passages, both in the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament, which prescribe the forgiveness of injuries, subject to no condition whatever; which positively enjoin the returning of good for evil; which command Christians to bless those that curse them; to pray for those, who are persecuting and despitefully using them all the while. In these cases, the supposed repentance and regret of the party in fault are altogether out of the question; or rather it is taken for granted that he is actuated by the most hostile spirit, at the identical moment when his conduct is required to be met and requited by so different a behaviour, on the part of the object of his hatred and the sufferer from his violence.

On the other hand, we have seen, that at the beginning of the discourse which led to the parable, various expedients were suggested, as the proper course to be pursued in the resentment of injuries; each of which successively had the same object in view; viz. to bring the author of the injury to a sense of his fault, to get him to acknowledge it, and to wish to be forgiven it; in order that forgiveness might fitly and freely be extended to him. We have seen too, that the answer returned to the question of Peter, though couched in such terms as appeared to exclude all conditions to the supposed obligation to the duty of forgiveness, yet when compared with the parallel passage of St. Luke's Gospel, did virtually proceed on the assumption, that the forgiveness of an injury committed was to be conceded by the sufferer from it, as often as its forgiveness was solicited by its author; but not as it seemed, in any other case.

It appears too, from the representation in the parable, that the misconduct of the unmerciful servant consisted principally, or rather totally, in this; that having been freely forgiven himself a very large debt, upon acknowledging it to be due, and declaring his wish and desire to discharge it, if time and opportunity were allowed him for that purpose—he had refused a similar indulgence, in a very trifling instance, to a fellow-servant of his own; though he also admitted his debt, and professed his willingness to repay it, on the same conditions. In both cases, then, the confession of the debt, and a disposition at least, to repay it, so far as the ability of the debtor would permit, were at the bottom of the motive which operated, or should have operated, in pro-

curing its remission, gratuitous as that might be. Had either of the debtors acted otherwise; had they impudently denied the justice, or as obstinately refused the payment, of their respective debts; no such consequence as the unconditional remission of the debt could have ensued, or with propriety have been expected to ensue, in either case.

Now where debts stand for injuries, and debtors for their authors, confession of the debt, and a profession of willingness to discharge it on the one hand, must answer to confession of the injury, to admission of the right to redress, and to a declared willingness to render it, if insisted on—in one word, to the contrition and penitence of the injurer—on the other. And as the former would be necessary to the remission of the debt; so must the latter be indispensable to the forgiveness of the injury—that is, the renunciation of the right to redress. The parable itself, then, considered as supplying a case in point to illustrate the previous discourse, is strictly in unison with its doctrine; and by its own beautiful moral inculcates the same duty of forgiveness, but still as subject to the same condition of the penitence of the offending party, and of his desire to be forgiven.

How, then, are we to reconcile this doctrine with the passages referred to; which prescribe the duty of forgiveness in cases where the repentance of the injuring parties was neither supposed to be, nor in fact could be, the proper qualification for it? The context shews that those places, which inculcate the doctrine of forgiveness, under such circumstances as these, apply to the fact of such injuries as were, or might be, inflicted by unbelievers upon believers—by the enemies of the Christian religion upon its pro-

fessors—for no other reason, than because they were its enemies, and the subjects of their outrages were its friends. They are such injuries as would be suffered, under any circumstances, for conscience sake; and in being so done and suffered, would amount to *persecution*. But the injuries, the resentment or forgiveness of which this whole discourse all along has had in view, are such as pass between brother and brother; that is, between one Christian and another. The question of Peter was not, “How often shall *one* offend against me?” but, “How often shall my *brother* offend against me?” The subordinate parties in the parable were fellow-subjects of the same king; fellow-servants of the same master: and that king and master being God, the heavenly Father of Christians, and the whole history in the parable being an illustration beforehand of the rule of judgment in the kingdom of heaven hereafter, these fellow-subjects and fellow-servants were not merely fellow-creatures and fellow-men, in general, but fellow-believers and fellow-Christians, in particular.

Now a different line of conduct might be incumbent on Christians, in the treatment of those injuries which, as advocates and martyrs of the truth, they would be liable to suffer from its enemies and persecutors, and with respect to such as one Christian might commit against another, one Christian might suffer from another. Of such outrages as the former, no reparation was to be expected, except by violent means; and violent means, from the nature of the injuries themselves, were not to be permitted to the injured. They who are bound to commit the redress of their wrongs (as all are required under

such circumstances to commit it) to the hands of God, must beware how they take it into their own; or have recourse to the arm of flesh, where they are allowed to combat their enemies with spiritual weapons only. In the mean time, it was due to the excellence and dignity of the Christian principle, to exhibit not merely the difficult practical lesson of suffering, and suffering with patience, for righteousness' sake; but the still harder one, of suffering apparently without being provoked even to wish for revenge or retaliation; of doing good as long, and with as much perseverance, as its enemies did evil; and instead of being exasperated by the malice or rage of its assailants, to the use of similar weapons—by opposing force to force and fury to fury, even with the specious pretext of self-preservation—to baffle the efforts of its adversaries by the suspension of all efforts of its own; to shew powers of endurance commensurate to powers of infliction; to encounter hatred with benevolence, hostility with gentleness, violence with submission, rage and fury with calmness, composure, and resignation.

But the case is different, with regard to the doing and suffering of wrongs between Christians. For if Christians are forbidden maliciously to resent an injury, they are forbidden also maliciously to commit one: and it is as much against the principle of duty, and the law of charity, in their case, to do the latter, as to do the former. If one Christian then has wilfully committed an injury against another, he has been wilfully guilty of a dereliction of duty, and a breach of the law of charity, which unless repented of, may endanger even his salvation. The duty of the sufferer in this case, would seem to be

first, to bring the offender to a sense of his misconduct; and having done that, to forgive him. To bring him to a sense of his misconduct, is to dispose him to offer reparation; and that very disposition is, or ought to be, sufficient to make the party entitled to redress, willing to dispense with it. Nor is the only beneficial effect, which results from bringing him to this disposition, the reconciliation of two fellow-Christians together, one of whom had just reason to be offended with the other; but as far as the spiritual welfare of the party in fault was endangered by his offence, so far it will be recovered from danger by his repentance, and by the offer of reparation for his wrong.

Such, as we have repeatedly observed, were both the object proposed in the expedients enjoined above, and the effect resulting from them, if they succeeded. The author of the injury was first to be made desirous of forgiveness, as preliminary to being forgiven; and then freely to be forgiven, as the consequence of his desiring it. Nor, indeed, does it seem possible strictly to forgive, where forgiveness is not desired. Two parties are concerned in such an act—the giver of forgiveness and the receiver; and it seems indispensable to the full effect of the act, that, as in tendering and receiving any other boon, what the one is willing to offer, the other should be willing to accept. The doctrine of forgiveness, without the condition of the repentance of the offender, and as equally a duty under *all* circumstances—would become in the present life, an encouragement to the frequency of offences, by ensuring their impunity, and leaving the offenders apparently, with nothing to fear from their effects.

Where the parties concerned in a given practical question, are both of them Christians, no controversy can be raised, relating to their duty as binding on Christians, in which the presumed obligation can be entirely on *one* side; and what one has to do be clear and positive—what the other, doubtful or optional. If one brother Christian injures another, it is as much his duty, *in foro conscientie*, to offer reparation, as it is the other's not to insist upon it, or if it is offered, to decline it; while in the estimation of natural justice, it is much more so.

It is wrong in a Christian, to do an act of injustice; it would be wrong in any moral agent, to do one: but it would be still worse in either, to maintain and persist in it, when committed; which is so far to do it over again. The author of a deliberate injury, it might be said, was under no circumstances, a fit object of the boon of forgiveness; but the impenitent author of a deliberate injury, it may much more truly be said, can never be so. God himself is at all times ready to forgive the offences of his moral creatures against himself; but with the condition of their repenting, and asking to be forgiven: and on these easy, secure, and comfortable terms, he is every where in his revealed word, inviting sinners to solicit, and emboldening sinners to expect, the remission of their sins. But where, either in the Old or the New Testament, does he hold out any hope or encouragement to the careless, obdurate, and presumptuous offender? where does he inculcate the doctrine of persisting in sin, that grace may abound? where does he declare that he will pardon, justify, and accept his creatures, against their will and against their wish? that he will for-

give the sin, the forgiveness of which is not desired? that he will deal with any as entitled to mercy, who are not only obnoxious to justice, but know themselves to be so, and harden themselves in continuing so, without fear and without remorse?

With regard, then, to a case like this, which is certainly a possible one—where the performance of a personal duty by the subject, on the one hand, is thwarted and obstructed by the defect of a proper qualification in the object, on the other; the utmost which Christian charity seems capable of doing, or to be expected to do, is to hold itself in the disposition to forgive—as soon as forgiveness is sought for: but it cannot absolutely forgive, nor be reconciled to a brother in fault, until by his penitence, and return to a proper frame of mind, he is prepared to desire, and qualified to deserve, the boon. When, however, the forgiveness of an injury, let it be what it may, is solicited by its author in the spirit of contrition and regret; no Christian would comply with the prescribed rule of duty, or come up to the extent of his obligations, who did not cordially and frankly concede it, without seeking, desiring, or accepting of redress. The very idea of forgiving supposes a free and gratuitous act: to profess to forgive, and at the same time to expect or receive redress, is a contradiction in terms. To redress an injury would be virtually to undo it; and one who exacted or accepted redress, would exact or accept a compensation. He would be giving up nothing which he had a right to claim; and though he might not recover what he actually lost, he would obtain an equivalent for it.

The redress of an injury, so effected, without

leaving the agent any merit on the score of charity, ought of itself to put an end to all rancour and malice, and even every angry and resentful feeling, which might have been a consequence of the original provocation: because one who has obtained or accepted a compensation for a wrong, has no right any longer to consider himself aggrieved by it; but is placed in the same situation, as if he had never been injured. This surely is not what is meant by the forgiveness of injuries, in the high and exalted sense of the gospel obligation to the duty. There is no selfishness in Christian charity; its forgiveness is purely spontaneous, purely gratuitous; it is not bought with a price; it bargains for nothing; it stipulates for nothing; it will receive nothing; it has reserved nothing—in return for its proper act.

Without compensation, without remuneration, without an equivalent of any kind, it will do, as the consequence of its own liberality, what would otherwise be only the effect of the most ample and sufficient redress; it will not retain even a recollection of the past; it will treat the offender as if nothing had happened, or nothing were remembered to have happened, to lower him in its good opinion; to give occasion to the least difference of sentiment towards him, from before. To forgive, and not to forget, is to comply with the duty in the letter, but to break it in the spirit; it is to join together acts which are destructive of each other; to do and not to do, the same thing. Forgiveness is not forgiveness, if it is not complete; and it is not complete while it cherishes the recollection of the offence, and views the offender with an altered temper. Repentance on the part of an offender, however sincere, cannot

undo the effects of his crime: yet if it is sincere, it renders the subject as worthy of confidence, and even of affection, as before. Can we believe him sincere, and yet think him an object of suspicion, dislike, and distrust, just as much as if we knew him to be acting an hypocritical and deceitful part? Still more, can we profess to forgive him, upon the presumption of his sincerity, yet continue secretly to suspect and distrust him? It is not thus, that the heavenly Father of Christians, whose example is proposed as the rule of their conduct in this respect, deals with them. Does he forgive them at all, he forgives them entirely; and if he has once pardoned their offences, so long as they continue worthy of his renewed grace and favour, he wipes the past for ever from his book. Nor is it thus that the moral of the parable inculcates the measure and kind of the forgiveness, which it contemplated. That forgiveness is to be sincere, and given *from the heart*, if it is to be acceptable to God, or any argument with our own Father and Judge, for dealing leniently with ourselves. But this brings us to the consideration of the motive, by which the duty in question is enforced.

The peculiar principle of the obligation, on which the duty of forgiving others has been made incumbent on Christians, is the necessity of being forgiven themselves; not however, for injuries committed against their fellow-Christians, and as liable to be resented by them; but as committed against God, and in danger of being resented by God. Such injuries are properly *sins*. The true principle, then, on which Christians as such, are required to forgive

the offences of their fellow-Christians against themselves, is the fact, and the consciousness of the fact, that they too will necessarily require to be forgiven for offences or sins of their own, against God. It has pleased God to declare, that in his capacity of the supreme moral governor, to whom all the actions of moral agents, whether good or bad, must be accounted for, he will deal with us himself, in exacting a milder or stricter reckoning, as we ourselves shall be found to have dealt with our brethren, in the same or similar respects.

There is indeed no necessary connexion between forgiving and being forgiven. There was no reason *a priori* in the nature of the case, why our particular behaviour to others in this respect, should be made the standard and rule of the divine judgment in estimating the moral quality of our own deportment towards God, and resenting or forgiving it accordingly ; and therefore the standard is so far arbitrary, positive, and dependent on the good pleasure of God himself. But though we can perceive no necessary connexion between forgiving another and being forgiven ourselves, under any circumstances ; and more especially where he, whom we are supposed to forgive, is one of our fellow-men, and what we are supposed to forgive is merely some act of his, affecting ourselves ; but he, who is supposed to forgive us is God, and what he is supposed to forgive us, are our personal sins and transgressions against himself—yet, I think, we may perceive an almost necessary connexion between not *choosing* to forgive another, and not *deserving* to be forgiven by God.

It may not follow, that we acquire a right to be

forgiven by God, because we are not unwilling to forgive our neighbour; that we may certainly *expect* his forgiveness, because we would not *withhold* our own. But may it not follow, that we could never have a right to be forgiven by him, if we should never be willing to forgive ourselves; that we could never with reason expect *his* forgiveness, if we should always refuse to concede our *own*? The gratuitous kindness of one person to another, is no necessary reason why a third party should behave in the same way to him, even where this third party stands in the same relation to him, in which he himself stands to the second. The same person may be a creditor in respect of one person, and a debtor in respect of another; and in his capacity of creditor he may forgive if he pleases, the debt which is due *to* himself; but does he acquire thereby, in his capacity of debtor, a right to be forgiven the debt which is owing *by* him?

But where the same person stands in the same relation to a third, in which a second stands to himself; it is clear that the third party can have nothing to bestow in reference to the first, which the first also would not have to bestow in reference to the second; that the first can ask for nothing in his own behalf from the third, which the second might not also ask in his behalf from the first; that the first can claim nothing at the hands of the third, which the second might not claim at the hands of the first. In this case, the conduct which the first has pursued in reference to the second, may be a very good reason why the same conduct should be adopted by the third towards the first. The part which the first has acted towards the second, may

determine the part which the third shall act towards the first. The one may have been voluntary; yet shall render the other in some measure compulsory. The first may have freely chosen such a part towards the second, that the third shall have no room for choice or option, in acting any other part towards the first with consistency. By the nature of his part towards the second, the first shall have laid down a law which must determine the part of the third towards himself: and thus by the free and spontaneous act of the first towards the second, the act of the third towards the first may be so far decided, as not to be any longer free. On grounds of moral fitness and propriety, if not of absolute necessity, it must be the same as the other, and be only a repetition of it.

Any one man may stand in the relation of sinned against or injured, with respect to his neighbour, as all men actually stand in that of sinners, with respect to God; that is, the same man may be a creditor, with respect to his neighbour, in a sense nearly the same, in which God is a creditor with respect to him; and a debtor with respect to God, nearly in the same way, in which his neighbour is a debtor with respect to himself. With regard, then, to the question of being forgiven his own debt by God, as any way dependent on the forgiveness of his neighbour's debt to himself—let the proposition be stated hypothetically, and it will appear to be most just and true. If we have *need* to be forgiven ourselves by God; and if we *wish* to be forgiven ourselves by God; we must not be *unwilling* to forgive our neighbour; we must not *refuse* to forgive our neighbour. We cannot in decency ask God for that in our own

behalf, which, under the same circumstances, we would not concede to a suitor ourselves.

The obligation of the first of the debtors in the parable to shew kindness to the second, was contracted by his recent experience of a similar kindness from their common master towards himself. Had his master persisted in his original intention of treating him severely, he also might have been justified in treating his fellow-servant harshly: at least he would not have been amenable for any such usage, to the censure of their common master. Had the favour conferred upon him, too, been much less than the indulgence which he was expected to have shewn to his fellow-servant; the experience of the former in his own person, would have been no compulsory reason for granting the latter to the other. The remission of a debt of one hundred pence would have entailed no obligation to give up a demand of ten thousand talents; but the remission of a debt of ten thousand talents, was the strongest of reasons why one who had experienced that himself, should not rigidly insist on the demand of an hundred pence.

A motive to the duty of forgiveness like this, does not rest on an *hypothesis*, however probable; that perhaps we shall offend against God, and if we do offend, shall have need of his forgiveness; but upon an absolute *certainty*, that we do, and must offend against God; and we do, and must have need to be forgiven by God. And thus, even the first of the servants in the parable, was represented in the light of a debtor to their common master, before he was described as a creditor in relation to any fellow-servant; and in an amount too

incalculably greater as a debtor of his master, than as a creditor with respect to his fellow-servant.

In proposing such a motive, then, it is taken for granted that men will be sinners against God, as well as offenders against each other; that God will have something to lay to their charge, as well as they to the charge of each other: yet that the account, which each of us has to settle with God, is infinitely greater than any which we can have to adjust with our neighbour. It is taken for granted too, that we shall constantly be offenders against God, and constantly amenable to his vengeance: yet that we shall be able neither to satisfy his justice, if he insists on justice, nor to evade his power, if he is bent on resentment: that we must trust to his mercy, if we hope to be absolved and pardoned, or we must submit to his vengeance, if we expect to be dealt with after our deserts.

At no moment then, of our lives, can we venture to appear before God, except as those who have offended and displeased him; and unless freely forgiven, are obnoxious to his wrath. It follows, consequently, that even when we are sitting in judgment upon another, we are, or we may be arraigned ourselves before God; when we have an offence to resent against another, he too has offences to resent against us. The situation of our neighbour, at that particular juncture, in respect to ourselves, is the counterpart of our own at all times, in relation to God; or if a strict comparison be instituted between them, in point of right to an equitable and indulgent consideration of the particular case, the advantage is entirely on the side of our neighbour. There can be no more equality between

the sum total of all the offences which one man is capable of committing against another, and those which any one man commits, or may commit against God, than between one hundred denarii and ten thousand talents; not to say that even any *one* offence against God, in the intrinsic criminality of the act, and in the measure of punishment to which it is entitled, is more than sufficient to outweigh *all* the injuries, which any one man can commit against his neighbour as such.

Our neighbour, our brother, our fellow-Christian and fellow-believer, has been guilty of an injury against us; we too have sinned against God: his is perhaps a first offence; ours are of long continuance: his is perhaps a solitary instance of provocation; ours must consist of innumerable acts of transgression: he has need to be forgiven of us; so have we to be forgiven of God: he is most anxious to be forgiven by us; and who would not wish to be forgiven by God? it is a small favour, which he asks of us; it is an infinite obligation, which we would obtain from God: it is for his sake that he solicits it from us; it is for our own, that we hope for it from God. To pursue the analogy no further; they who refuse a favour, have no right to expect one, under circumstances exactly the same; much less have they, who refuse a very small favour, a right to expect a much greater of the same kind. If then, we will not do a certain thing for another, when it rests with us, is it just or reasonable to expect that the same thing should be done for us by another, when it rests with him? Have we a right to ask the very same thing which we refuse to grant? have we a right to receive, when we ask of another, the very

same thing which we will not give, when it is asked of ourselves? It does not follow of necessity that if we forgive our neighbour, God is obliged to forgive us; but may it not necessarily follow, that if we will not forgive our neighbour, God cannot with reason forgive usⁱ?

The motive, then, on which the duty of forgiveness is enforced, is eminently a *Christian* motive: and such as we should in vain look for among the arguments of the moralists of antiquity, to prove its obligation or to enforce its practice. Nor among these arguments, such as they are, can any be mentioned so reasonable in its principle, so satisfactory in its conclusion, and so generally applicable in practice, as that which the gospel assigns. It is meet and right, that frail creatures ourselves, we should sympathise with the frailty of creatures like ourselves; obnoxious to justice and punishment ourselves, we should not be too severe with offenders, nor extreme to resent what they do amiss; craving

ⁱ Ita que in aliis hominibus, nos ipsos cogitare debemus. non meremur in periculo liberari, si non succurrimus: non meremur auxilium, si negamus. Lactant. vi. 10. 532, 533.

Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 1—7: “He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins (in remembrance.) Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man which is like himself: and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins? If he that is but flesh nourish hatred, who will entreat for pardon of his sins? Remember thy end, and let enmity cease; (remember) corruption and death, and abide in the commandments. Remember the commandments, and bear no malice to thy neighbour: (remember) the covenant of the Highest, and wink at ignorance.”

mercy for ourselves, and conscious of its needfulness for ourselves, we should feel for a suppliant, and willingly lend an ear to the intercessions of pity in behalf of others.

Were mankind, or any part of mankind, perfect beings, incapable of conceiving or doing evil of any kind, the argument from the holiness of God, and the sense of their own liability to sin, would have borne no application to such as them. Were men omnipotent beings, who had nothing to fear from the power of God, the argument from his justice, and the sense of their own dependence upon him, would have been equally irrelevant to the same effect. But as human nature is really constituted, no consideration can be more apposite, or more convincing. The motive which operates on the Deity, in disposing him to pardon our offences against himself, must be altogether different from that which ought to sway with us, in inducing us to pardon the offences of others; and can be such only as is proper to operate with a Being who is infinitely powerful, just, and holy, as well as supremely good; his own mercy and benevolence, extended to their proper objects, through their appointed channel in Jesus Christ our Lord. The motive which must operate with us, in our fallen and dependent state, is the experience of our own weakness, and the consciousness of our own sinfulness; that we are at all times offenders against God, and at all times amenable to his justice, unless reprieved or pardoned by his clemency. Such a motive is the strongest of arguments *a pari*, and amounts to a self-evident axiom; nothing being more reasonable, nor more likely to command an intuitive assent, than this proposition; that they

who will not shew mercy, when it depends on themselves, have no right to expect mercy, when it depends on another: whosoever, under any circumstances, would deny to another the very thing which under similar circumstances he would ask for himself, is not entitled to receive it—is most justly to be refused the benefit of it.

The observance of the duty in question is, therefore, a part of a more general law, the cornerstone of Christian ethics—that we must do unto others, as we would wish to be done to ourselves; with this difference only, that in the application of this maxim to the forgiveness of injuries, we are required to do to our fellow-men, as we would have God to do to us. Nor is the inducement to forgive the injuries done us by others, from the hope that our own sins against God may be more leniently resented on that account, inconsistent with the further consideration that to forgive the offences of others against ourselves; may possibly be the likeliest means to induce others to forgive our offences against them. As our fellow-men are capable of injuring us, so are we of injuring them; and as they may have need of our forgiveness, so may we of theirs. In this case, the doctrine of doing to others, as we would have them do to ourselves, would be strictly applicable; for as every man would, or ought to wish to be forgiven by his neighbour, were he so unfortunate as to commit an injury against him, so should he be ready, on the same principle, to forgive his neighbour, if he has done any thing amiss to himself.

Is it inquired, then, why this motive is not proposed along with, or independent of the other, which we have been considering? I answer, that first, the

existence of this further motive is not compromised by the circumstance of its not being formally brought forward ; it may have its weight, among the other arguments for the observance of the duty of forgiveness ; but it was not so proper to be distinctly insisted on ; or to be urged as the sole and authoritative ground of the obligation in question. This motive would not have been so analogous to the state of the case in the parable ; according to which we are supposed to be sinners against God, before we are described as sinned against by our neighbour ; and to have need of forgiveness ourselves, before we are called upon to forgive another. Nor would it have been so universally applicable, or have come so directly home to the conscience and experience of every one of us, as the other. There can be no persons who have not sinned against God ; there may perhaps be persons who have not offended against their neighbour : there can be no persons, then, who are not, or who ought not to be conscious that they need at all times, to be forgiven by God ; but there may be persons, who might not be conscious at particular times, that they needed to be forgiven by their neighbour. The wisest and best of men, who partakes of human infirmity as well as his brethren, is not beyond the reach of a motive derived from his own weakness and imperfection ; while as to the bulk of mankind, they are only too well qualified to judge of its personal application to themselves, and only too much bound to confess, that no consideration ought to have more weight and authority with them, in determining their conduct to their neighbour, than that of their own repeated offences against and provocations of God.

Nor would this motive have been so persuasive ; so proper to trust to ; so full of a well assured confidence in the efficacy of the sanction, and a proportionable encouragement to the observance of the duty, as the other. To be ready to forgive in our own persons ; to set the first example of forgiveness ourselves, may be a likely means to induce others to a reciprocity of feeling, and to similar acts of forbearance, under similar circumstances, towards us. But we cannot reckon on its infallibly having this effect. The perverseness, the insensibility, the ingratitude and selfishness of the world at large, may disappoint our reasonable expectations, and prevent us from reaping the benefit of that return of kindness for kindness, and of forbearance for forbearance, of which we have set the example. To do good in any way to others, in the hope of an adequate return from them again, is a calculation of consequences that will often be found to be mistaken ; and by the repeated experience of disappointment, is more likely to deaden than to keep alive the active impulse of charity and benevolence, which require for their constant health and support, a principle of life and vigour, the vitality of which is indestructible ; the energy of which is indefatigable. No motive to the exercise of these virtues can operate so surely and steadily, as that which the present doctrine supposes. Where God himself has promised a certain consequent, upon condition of a certain antecedent ; no one needs to doubt about obtaining the former, who is only willing to do his own part with respect to the latter. Let him who would wish to be forgiven by God, begin with forgiving his brother ; and let him then see, whether God is disposed to listen

favourably to his own supplications for forgiveness, or not. Had we been called upon to stipulate for ourselves, the terms on which we would desire to provide for the fact of forgiveness, or to secure the disposition to forgive in our own behalf, on the part of God, as oft as we needed it; I do not think we could spontaneously have fixed upon any, as more just and equitable, or more likely to suggest themselves—than these. And must not that motive be full of comfort and encouragement, which places our own attainment of a personal, a positive, a necessary and indispensable good, the forgiveness by God of our sins against him, on a condition so entirely within our own power, so completely at our own option, as this—of forgiving the offences of our fellow-men against ourselves?

The consideration of like to be expected for like—of one act of forgiveness which has preceded, to be met and reciprocated by another, which is to follow—strictly speaking, would apply only to cases of aggression and forbearance between the *same* parties; one of whom at one time, and the other at another, was the injurer; and *vice versa*. If *I* have received an injury from a certain person, and have forgiven *him* for it; that may be a very good reason why the *same* person, if I afterwards injure him, should also forgive *me*: but not that another person, on whom I have never conferred the like obligation, should do so. The same consideration, too, if calculated for man at all, as a motive to determine his conduct under the resentment, or forgiveness of injuries, is calculated for him merely as a member of society, as one of his species in general; not simply

as a moral agent, and a responsible being, all whose actions, whether good or bad, and whatever be their consequences to those around him, are ultimately referable to the approbation or disapprobation of his Creator and Judge. And with this reference, no motive could have been proposed for the observance of the duty, but that which the parable supposes: according to which the *Alpha* and *Omega* of our social relations themselves is personal—our first and our last concern in all our actions, is how they will be approved or disapproved in the sight of God—how they will affect the question of our individual account with God.

In order to obviate a mistake, which may possibly arise from this view of the force and efficacy even of the motive in question, it is very important to observe, that the condition of forgiving, or being ready to forgive, the offences of others against ourselves, before we can expect the forgiveness of our own sins by God, is not inconsistent with the further condition of repentance for those sins themselves. The condition in question is not proposed as an absolute *meritorious* ground, on which to expect the forgiveness of our sins from God, as *matter of right*: but as a preliminary qualification, without which we could not be fit to ask for, much less to receive, forgiveness of our sins at all. Were it otherwise proposed, it would be proposed on the terms of a bargain or compensation; by which, if we would consent to forgive others, God entered, as it were, into a covenant, that he would agree to forgive us: the idea of which covenant, in a case like that of the

forgiveness of his own creatures by their Creator and Judge, seems absurd, if it be not even blasphemous.

I have already observed that there is no necessary connexion between the act of forgiving, as an antecedent, and that of being forgiven, as a consequent: especially between the act of forgiving our fellow-men ourselves, and being therefore forgiven ourselves by God. For what has the merit of one man's particular conduct to another, in remitting his claims upon him, to do with his own obligations to a third party—that he must needs follow his example, and do as much by him as he has done by the other, in the way of favour or gratuity? Still more, what has any man's conduct, in remitting his claims on another, to do with his personal obligations to his Maker? why should God forgive us our sins against him, because we have forgiven our brother his offences against us? We cannot return an answer to this question, which will shew it to be, *a priori*, fit or necessary that he should do so; which will go beyond the mere statement of a matter of fact; viz. that God has been graciously pleased to establish a connexion between these things, to make the one of them virtually dependent on the other; and therefore, that we may take it for granted they are connected, and if the first has truly preceded, the second may really be expected to follow.

But if we reverse the question, and ask; What has the forgiveness of ourselves by God, to do with our being willing or unwilling to forgive one another; why should not God forgive us our sins against him, even though we do not forgive the

offences of others against ourselves? every one, of right feeling and common sense, must see at once what answer should be returned in this case. It is the height of inconsistency, the climax of presumption, for man to think of asking for that from God, which he would not give to man; to expect God to deal otherwise with him, than he himself, under the same circumstances, would deal with another person.

A disposition, then, to forgive others, is a necessary qualification previously, for any one's reception of personal forgiveness from God; but it is not sufficient to deserve or procure that forgiveness itself. It is one thing, to be admitted as a suitor into the presence of a prince; it is another, to obtain the prayer of the petition. We must be allowed to approach the throne of grace, before we can obtain the requests that we prefer even there; and with hearts full of rancour, and malice, and bitterness against each other, we cannot expect the admission, much less the success, of our prayers for mercy in our own behalf. When, then, we are petitioning God for the pardon of our own sins, we are commanded, as preliminary to the concession of our suit, to declare ourselves ready and willing to forgive our neighbour, if we have ought against him. I say as a preliminary: for it is in fact nothing more, however indispensable a preliminary to the audience, and very entertainment, of our suit; without which God will not only refuse to hear it, but will resent it as the greatest of insults and affronts, even to himself, that we presume to ask it. He will reject us, unheard; he will drive us in disgrace from his presence—until we are prepared to come before him in a frame

of mind more congenial to the business on which we approach him ; not with a lie in our mouths ; nor in the hypocritical character of dissemblers with him, who doubt of his omniscience, or presume on his easiness ; and think they may safely venture to ask him, in their own behalf, for the very thing which they themselves would not give to another, in the same situation as themselves.

But let us approach, as we may, to the confession of our sins before God, in the spirit of charity and good-will towards man ; still every one's conscience must at once assure him, that his prayers will stand or fall after all, on their proper grounds of acceptance or rejection : and scripture acknowledges no other ground of the acceptance of prayers, under such circumstances, but that of a sincere repentance. Charity must usher the sinner before the throne of grace, and into the presence of the Lord of mercies : a wounded and contrite spirit ; a bitter conviction of guilt ; an ardent desire of forgiveness ; a deep sense of his own unworthiness ; a frank and entire reliance on the goodness and clemency of God, through its appointed channel ; these and such like requisites alone must prevail to the concession of his suit at last. And this truth seems to be intimated in the parable itself : for had not the first of the servants acknowledged the justice of his debt, he would never have obtained its remission ; and had the second denied the obligation of his, his treatment would not have been undeserved. Even the efficacy of repentance is not available to procure the remission of sin, except as accompanied by a trust in the merits of a crucified Redeemer : for the justice of God required to be satisfied before his

mercy itself was free to act. How much less any other condition of acceptance ; which should claim to be sufficient without regard to the necessity of repentance itself.

In like manner, it is to be observed that even though we ourselves should be entirely ready to forgive the offences of others, they are not excused from the necessity of repentance for them, in their own behalf—considered as sins against God, not merely as offences against man. Both the debts in the parable were represented by sums of money ; that is, they were both the same in kind, however different in degree respectively. An hundred denarii are still an integral part of ten thousand talents, however small a part. It is implied then, that the offences of man against man, to which this representation properly applies, are not merely occasions of anger, but of a much more serious character : such, as besides injuring man, involve over and above a moral guilt in respect of God. Nor can we, in fact, offend in any such manner against our neighbour, without offending at the same time against God ; every such offence against man, being a breach of some one or other of the laws of God. The forgiveness of these last, on a principle of Christian charity, does much more imply the forgiveness of more slight offences ; and though the highest exercise of forbearance in the injured party, it does not exempt the offender from the necessity of being penitent for them himself, and so making his peace again with God.

The spirit of charity and forbearance can scarcely fail to be accompanied by the sense of personal weakness and sinfulness ; either as suggested by it, or as

included in it. It is certain, at least, that no one can humble himself, as he is bound to do, in the consciousness of his own unworthiness in the sight of God; and not be disposed to be kind and considerate, equitable and indulgent, in his estimation of the conduct of others. It is a natural sympathy which makes us feel for our fellows; or for those whose situation in a given respect, reminds us of our own in the same. Did we think deeply and feelingly of our own manifold offences against God, we should think very slightly and leniently in comparison, of our neighbour's offences against ourselves; we should be too much concerned for our own salvation, too much afraid of endangering it by any needless aggravation of our personal liabilities, to be guilty of hardheartedness and obduracy towards others.

The conscience of the self-condemned and truly penitent sinner, instinctively assures him, that no man can have so much to answer for to another, as every man has to answer for to God: much more that those petty, insignificant grounds of irritation and offence, which constitute the greatest class of what are called injuries—magnified as they are, so much beyond their due, and resented as they are, with an heat and exasperation of feeling, that disturb the peace, and embitter the happiness of society—can never be set for a moment in competition with the number, the regularity, the enormity of every man's individual transgressions against God. For who is there that liveth, and sinneth not? who is there, that can pass through life, and not sin times without number against God? Nor let us suppose, that though some offences committed against him, may be much worse than others; yet that any the

least delinquency which constitutes a *sin*, and as such is an injury done to God, can possibly be venial; and not justly entitled to punishment, even the punishment of eternal death.

The truth is, we know not the time when we first began to sin; and it is certain that we can never know, in the present life, a time when we shall no longer be capable of sinning. In sin our mothers have conceived us; in sin we were born; in sin we live; and in sin we must die. Sin may be committed, (and be intrinsically criminal when committed,) in thought, as well as in word; and in word, as well as in deed^k. The guilt of sin is in proportion to the majesty, dignity, and excellence, the holiness, goodness, and purity of the Being who is offended thereby: and if these are infinite, so may the other be. It is one of the most lamentable, and yet one of the most natural consequences of our sinfulness itself, that it cannot perceive its own deformity; it blinds our moral sense to the true nature of sin. Angels may see and comprehend it, as it is, even now; but man must again be made perfect, as he once was perfect, to feel and to abhor it, as he ought.

^k Primus est virtutis gradus, malis operibus abstinere; secundus, etiam malis verbis; tertius, etiam cogitatione rerum malarum. qui primum gradum ascendit, satis justus est: qui secundum, jam perfectæ virtutis; siquidem neque factis, neque sermone delinquat: qui tertium, is vero similitudinem Dei assecutus videtur. est enim pæne supra humanum modum, ne in cogitationem quidem admittere, quod sit vel factum malum, vel improbum dictum. itaque etiam justi homines, qui frænare se possunt ab omni opere injusto, nonnunquam tamen ipsa fragilitate vincuntur; ut vel in ira malum dicant, vel in aspectu rerum delectabilium, cogitatione tacita concupiscant. Lactantius, Div. Inst. vi. 13. 539.

In proportion as charity, benevolence, brotherly-kindness, and universal philanthropy, are amiable in the eyes of God ; the opposite qualities, no doubt, are odious and offensive to him : in proportion too, as charity merely, or Christian love, may stand for the complex of Christian perfection, the contrary habit of mind will be regarded as abstract Christian depravity. It may be said also, that the rule of judgment, by which our own sins against God are to be imputed to us or not, as we forgive or do not forgive the offences of others against ourselves ; is part of the general rule, according to which our good or our evil deeds to others, will be rewarded or punished, just as if they affected God. By far the greatest part of the actions for which men will hereafter have to give an account, may be such as they have done to others. Refusing forgiveness to those who desired, and so far were entitled to forgiveness, may rank among the injuries done to our neighbour ; and may become the ground of so much the more severe a treatment of ourselves. The same word of God which commands us not to do an injury, commands us not to resent one ; and makes it as binding on the conscience to forgive, where forgiveness is solicited, as to offer redress, where redress is due¹. But the truth is, the best men, in the present state of things, are the most sensible of their

¹ The Acta of Nicephorus (Ruinart. Acta Martyrum, 239.) furnish a remarkable example on the subject of the forgiveness of injuries, the moral of which is this ; that the grace of God will abandon one, who obstinately refuses to grant the pardon which his offending brother earnestly asks for, even at the last moment, and when he would otherwise be about to crown a pious and exemplary life, by some wonderful proof of faith and constancy, even the testimony of a glorious martyrdom.

own infirmities; and they who are the most sensible of their own, cannot but be most indulgent to the weakness of others. Placability, therefore, is a necessary constituent of Christian virtue. To be good as Christians ought to be, and as Christians are supposed to be, yet to be resentful—vindictive—malicious—would, indeed, be to unite qualities which were contradictory to each other, and could not subsist in conjunction.

After all, it is an alternative or choice—I will not say of evils—but between a temporary gratification, and a future loss; a temporary loss and disadvantage, and a future benefit—which is proposed to us. If a man prefers his revenge to his salvation, he may pursue the former, and have the pleasure arising from the pursuit and indulgence of the former—but at the certain expense of the latter. If we feel that we are truly sinners ourselves; that we have truly need of forgiveness ourselves; that our eternal salvation, or our everlasting damnation, is dependent on the pleasure or displeasure of God; that he has fixed the condition on which only he will permit us to sue for his pardon, and to acquire his favour in our own behalf—in that case, if we would obtain the promise, we must comply with the terms: we must begin with forgiving others, before we think of asking God to forgive us.

Lastly; it appeared from the parable, that though the forgiveness of the first of the debtors was granted by his lord and master at the time, without reserve; yet it was subject to the implied condition of acting to another, as he had been treated himself; and unless he did so, that it might, and it would be recalled. The pardon, then, even of our

past offences, may be revoked by our Father and Judge, at a subsequent period of our lives, unless we continue to the end, faithful on our part to the spirit of the engagement, in which alone it was granted. It is highly expedient, therefore, even for our own sakes, that we should retain the same temper of charity towards all men, at all times, but more especially at the close of our lives. To die in the contrary frame of mind, of all things would be the most dangerous to our salvation. The practical drift of the parable is, consequently, to inculcate not isolated acts of forgiveness ; but the formation of habits and dispositions, dwelling within us and constituting our principle of action, which shall qualify us on every proper occasion, to exemplify the necessary longsuffering, meekness, forbearance and patience, which our duty as Christians, and our regard to our own salvation, as well as to the peace and harmony, so essential to the immunity of social happiness, in the present life, render incumbent on us.

PARABLE TENTH. ALLEGORICAL.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN X. 1--18. HARMONY, P. IV. 20.

JOHN X. 1--18.

1 " Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not into
" the fold of the sheep through the door, but climbeth up
" from any other part, that one is a thief and a robber. 2 But
" he that entereth in through the door, is a shepherd of the
" sheep. 3 To this one the porter openeth; and the sheep
" obey his voice: and his own sheep he calleth by name, and
" leadeth them forth. 4 And when he hath put his own sheep
" forth, he walketh before them, and the sheep follow him; be-
" cause they know his voice. 5 But a stranger will they not
" follow, but will flee from him: because they know not the
" voice of strangers."

6 This proverb did Jesus speak unto them: but they un-
derstood not what things they were, which he was saying unto
them. 7 Then said Jesus unto them again:

" Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the
" sheep. 8 As many soever as have come instead of me, are
" thieves and robbers: but the sheep have not obeyed them.
" 9 I am the door: if one enter in through me, he shall be
" saved, and shall go in, and shall go out, and shall find pas-
" ture. 10 The thief cometh not but that he may steal, and
" may slay, and may destroy (*the sheep*); I am come, that
" they may have life, and may have *it* abundantly. 11 I am
" the shepherd, the good *one*: the shepherd, the good *one*,
" layeth down his life in behalf of the sheep; 12 but the
" hired (*keeper*), and who is not a shepherd, whose own the
" sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the

“ sheep, and fleeth : and the wolf seizeth them, and scattereth the sheep. ¹³ Now the hired (*keeper*) fleeth, because he is an hired (*keeper*), and he careth not about the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the shepherd, the good *one*, and know my *sheep*, and am known by my *sheep*, ¹⁵ even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father: and I lay down my life in behalf of the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep have I, which are not from this fold ; and those *sheep* must I bring : and they will obey my voice, and there shall become one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ Because of this thing doth the Father love me, that I lay down my life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one taketh it from me ; but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commission received I from my Father.”

MATERIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THERE are some circumstances of distinction between the parable of the good shepherd, recorded by St. John, and the other parables of either sort, recorded by the rest of the evangelists ; which apparently discriminate them asunder. The most important of these were specified in the proper place elsewhere ^a. Nor is the claim of this parable of St. John's to the common name of a parable, or the propriety of giving it a place among the rest, affected by the existence of these distinctions ; especially as three of the most essential characteristics of the class of parables, to which we have assigned it, are as true of this one in particular, as of all the rest in general.

It is an allegory, like the rest : it is the vehicle of prophecy, like the rest : it was incomprehensible and unintelligible at the time of its delivery, as well as

^a Introd. chap. i. and chap. xi.

the rest. The fact of its symbolical nature appears on the face of the description; to understand which literally, or to suppose it was ever designed to be so understood, would be the height of absurdity. The truth of its prophetic character will be established, by the exposition hereafter to be given of it: and as to the reality of the mystery and obscurity which attached to the whole discourse, when first pronounced; it is confirmed both by the testimony of the evangelist, who records it, and by the conduct of the Jews, who heard it. When Jesus had pronounced the first part of the allegory; St. John observes, "This proverb did Jesus speak unto them; but they understood not what things they were, which he was saying to them." When Jesus had resumed the discourse, and made an end of it a second time; he tells us, there was again a division, or difference of opinion, among the hearers; that none of them understood him, and some went so far as to charge him with having a demon, and raving or being mad: John x. 19—21.

It is also to be observed, that to whatever extent the allegory of the good shepherd deserves to be regarded as a parable, it is almost the only discourse of that kind which is furnished by the Gospel of St. John. There is but one more instance to be met with therein, of an allegory like the present, which bears the same personal relation to the Messiah as this; and had it been drawn out to a greater length, would have admitted of a comparison with it: viz. where our Lord, in the course of his long conversation with the twelve, at the celebration of the last supper, figuratively describes his personal relation to them, as that of the true vine to its branches; and

their personal relation to himself, as that of the true branches to the vine; and the common relation of the Father to both, as that of the husbandman, who dresses both the vine and its branches^b.

The parable of the good shepherd is, consequently, the most remarkable, if not the sole instance, which contributes to illustrate the uniformity of the manner of our Saviour's teaching, in so characteristic a circumstance as the use of allegory or parable, whether to convey moral instruction or to predict the future—exemplified in the last of the gospels—compared with the same manner, as it appears in the former three. If there is any further distinction between them, upon this point; it concerns not the common mode or form, but the particular matter and design of the teaching in each. The instrument employed is the same in each instance, but the use that is made of it respectively is different. The proverb of St. John bears the same relation to our Saviour, as the parable of the other evangelists to the kingdom of heaven. The character, relations, and offices of a spiritual Messiah, are portrayed by the allegorical descriptions of the former; as the rise, the progress, the constitution, design or effects of the Christian dispensation are by those of the latter. The proverb of St. John, then, has a direct personal relation to its author himself; the parable of the other evangelists has not. Our Saviour is the speaker of both; but he speaks of himself in the one—of his religion, in some peculiar and characteristic point of view, in the other.

Independently, indeed, of every other consider-

^b John xv. 1—6. Harm. P. iv. 90.

ation, the beauty of the parable in question is abundantly sufficient to recommend it to our notice, and to engage in its behalf the admiration of any reader of taste. The most accomplished remains of antiquity supply no example of an allegorical picture, so happily conceived and executed, so elaborate and yet so simple, as this; where the imagery is more natural and familiar, yet more select, and orderly, and well arranged; where there is more clearness and vivacity in the conceptions, more elegance and purity in the expressions. Nor is it the least remarkable of its characteristic properties, that under so obvious and popular an exterior, doctrines the most profound and mysterious that Christianity has to convey, are nevertheless concealed.

The particulars of the allegory are derived from the circumstances, relations, and images of pastoral life; with which it might be presumed that every modern reader, from a variety of associations, would be sufficiently acquainted. But these circumstances may vary in different countries, and at different periods of time; and it is certain that there were many things, characteristic of pastoral life among the Jews, and other nations of the East, which to our own apprehensions are singular, and apply neither to the actual usages of pastoral life, as they exist among us, nor to that more attractive, but fanciful idea of it, which might be derived from the ancient or modern pastoral poets. Some of these peculiar circumstances are recognised in the allusions of the present description; and therefore, though perfectly intelligible to the hearers of our Saviour at the time, they may require to be explained and illustrated, for the benefit of modern readers.

For example ; to justify the language of the present description, a sheepfold among the Jews, must have been a very different thing from a sheepfold in our own country. It could not have consisted of hurdles loosely put together, or rudely constructed sheds, thatched with straw ; but must have been a strong, substantial building, guarded and secured both within and without ; surrounded by a wall, to prevent admission except by the regular entrance, and provided with a door, kept by a porter, and fortified by bars and bolts. Had not this been the case, and well known to his hearers to be so, our Saviour would not have spoken of the legitimate mode of gaining admission into such a fold, as lying through such a door ; nor of the existence of a porter, to open and shut this door ; nor of such an irregular mode of access into the fold, as climbing up from without ; which implies the scaling of an exterior wall—in order to get into the fold by any way, not through the door.

In a country like Judæa, where the wealth of the inhabitants consisted principally in flocks and herds, great care and pains would naturally be bestowed on the preservation of that species of property. Buildings sufficiently ample and secure for their reception and protection, would no doubt be every where constructed. Many kinds of wild beasts too, as the bear, the jackal, the fox, the lion, existed in Judæa ; from whose ravages the cattle would require some defence : and among other reasons which rendered it necessary to provide buildings for them to inhabit at stated times, there was one of perpetual obligation, because derived from the climate of the country ; viz. that between the com-

mencement of the first or autumnal rains, and that of the second or vernal, that is, from the autumnal equinox to the vernal, in every year, the flocks and herds could no longer be kept night and day in the open air, but required to be taken under cover, to protect them from the inclemency of the weather.

It appears from Genesis xxxii. 17. that Succoth received its name from the fact of Jacob's having built himself an house there, and *booths* for his cattle; in which fact it is implied, that the latter were as substantial and durable a kind of building, as the former. At the time of the plague of hail, we read in Exodus, "He that feared the word of the Lord " among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants " and his cattle flee into the houses ^c:" and it is evident that those houses for the reception of the cattle and their keepers, must have been proportionably strong and secure, to protect their inmates from such a visitation as that of the plague of hail ^d. The tribe of Reuben, and the other two whose patrimony had been assigned them on the eastern side of the Jordan, on condition of passing over armed to the assistance of their brethren also; in order that they might comply with this stipulation the more securely, proposed to build *sheepfolds* for their cattle, as well as *cities* for their wives and children ^e;

^c Exod. ix. 20.

^d Diodorus Siculus tells us, accordingly, of the cattle in Egypt, during the inundations of the Nile: τὰ δὲ βοσκήματα κατὰ τὸν τῆς ἀναβάσεως χρόνον ἐν ταῖς κώμαις καὶ ταῖς ἀγροικίαις διατρέφε-ται, προπαρασκευαζομένης αὐτοῖς τῆς τροφῆς. Lib. i. 36.

^e Numbers xxxii. 16. Cf. 24—36, and Deut. iii. 19. Also Judges v. 16.

no doubt, because the former would be just as necessary, and just as adequate, to protect their inmates, in the absence of the men, as the latter. And among the other things provided by Hezekiah, besides storehouses or granaries for the fruits of the ground, that is, the increase of corn, wine, and oil; *stalls* also, for all manner of beasts; and *cotes* for flocks, are mentioned ^f. There can be no doubt, then, that a sheepfold in Judæa was such a building as we have supposed; a solid and permanent structure, equally well adapted both for the safe custody of its inmates, and for defence against external violence.

Again; sheep, among the Jews, must have been accustomed to know their keeper by the sound of his voice, and to follow him to and from the fold, or wheresoever he might choose to lead them: otherwise it would not have been mentioned, as one of the circumstances of the description, that when the shepherd has got admission into the fold, he calls out his sheep by name; he puts himself at their head, and leads them to their pasture: nor that the sheep recognise him by the tone of his voice, and obediently follow behind, while he walks before.

Now this characteristic of the habits of pastoral life among the Jews, is the most singular to our apprehensions, because the most remote from our observation, of any; and what is more, it would have appeared as extraordinary to any of the ancients, except a native of the East, as it does to ourselves. We meet with no allusions in the classical poets, not even in their bucolical or pastoral poems, where they were most likely to occur; which would lead

^f 2 Chron. xxxii. 28.

to the inference that among the Greeks or Romans, sheep were trained to follow, instead of being driven by their keeper. No such custom is alluded to by the most ancient classical poets, Hesiod and Homer; so as to imply that the practice was usual in their times, though it might have ceased afterwards. The circumstance in question, then, is a characteristic distinction between the pastoral habits not simply of ancient and modern times in general, but of the East and the West in particular, from times of a remote antiquity.

That sheep are naturally not only gregarious, but disposed to follow a leader, every one, who has paid the least attention to their habits, cannot but have remarked. We know also, that sheep are capable of great attachment to man; a propensity easily to be encouraged into an implicit obedience of their keeper—an entire conformity to the will and directions of their shepherd. That the fact of their being so disciplined in the East, from a period that goes as far back as the memory of man, does not rest upon mere hypothesis, may be proved by the testimony of the Old Testament; throughout the whole of which, from the time of the descent into Egypt, if I am not much mistaken, there is not a single allusion to the practice of *driving*, however repeatedly mention is made of *leading*, sheep §.

§ The following are some of the direct allusions to the custom in question, which we meet with in various parts of the Old Testament; shewing its prevalence in Egypt, Arabia, and Judæa.

Exod. iii. 1: "Moses . . . *led* the flock to the backside of the "desert"—Psalm lxxvii. 20: "Thou *leddest* thy people like a

Among other authorities, whose testimony would concur with the evidence of the Old Testament to

“flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron”—lxxviii. 52: “But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and *guided* them in the wilderness like a flock”—lxxx. 1: “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that *leadest* Joseph like a flock.” Cf. Rev. vii. 17.

It is likewise implied in such metaphorical allusions to it as the following: Numbers xxviii. 16, 17: “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in: that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd”—2 Kings ii. 5: “Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day?” Cf. 1 Kings xxii. 17. 2 Chron. xviii. 16. Zech. xiii. 7.

The Liber Enoch, an apocryphal work, translated by Dr. Laurence from the Ethiopic, was the composition of a Jew of Palestine. The following allusion occurs in it, cap. lxxviii. 36, 37: “But the Lord of the sheep proceeded with them, and conducted them, and the sheep followed him.”

Ignatius, Epist. ad Philadelphenos. ii. 869. E: ὄπου δὲ ὁ ποιμὴν ἔστιν, ἐκεῖ ὡς πρόβατα ἀκολουθεῖτε—Lucian, i. 815. Hermotimus, 73. l. 22: ἀλλ’ ἠκολούθει τοῖς τῶν προωδευκῶτων ἵχνεσι, καθάπερ τὰ πρόβατα πρὸς τὸν αὐτῶν ἡγούμενον. κ. τ. λ.—Clemens Alexandrinus, i. 129. l. 24. Pædagog. i. 7: ἔσθ’ ὅτε οὖν ποιμένα ἕαντον καλεῖ, καὶ λέγει, Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλός. κατὰ μεταφορὰν ἀπὸ τῶν ποιμένων τῶν καθηγουμένων τοῖς προβάτοις, ὁ καθηγούμενος τῶν παιδίων, παιδαγωγὸς νοούμενος κ. τ. λ.—Chrysostom, iv. 18. D. De Sacerdotio, ii.: ὁ μὲν γὰρ τῶν προβάτων ποιμὴν, ἔχει τὸ ποιμνιον ἐπόμενον, ἥπερ ἂν ἡγῆται· εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐκτρέποιτό τινα τῆς εὐθείας ὁδοῦ, καὶ τὴν ἀγαθὴν ἀφιέντα νομῆν, λεπτόγεα καὶ ἀπόκρημνα βόσκειτο χωρία· ἀρκεῖ βοῆσαντα σφοδρότερον συνελάσαι πάλιν, καὶ εἰς τὴν ποιμνὴν ἐπαναγαγεῖν τὸ χωρισθέν.

Polybius relates, xii. iv. 2, that in the island of Cyrnus, off the coast of Africa, the surface of the country being overgrown with wood, and full of rocks, it was not practicable for the

vouch for the truth of the same fact, we may mention Ignatius, bishop of Antioch; Lucian of Samosata; Clement of Alexandria; and Chrysostom, bishop of Antioch; all of them natives of the East, and of that vicinity, in which the custom in question more particularly prevailed. I shall quote, however, only one independent testimony to it; because it is furnished by a Greek poet, and so far as I am myself aware, is the only one which the range of classical literature is competent to supply. Apollonius Rhodius, who flourished in the court of the second of the Macedonian kings of Egypt, and therefore was personally acquainted with the pastoral usages of the East; has borrowed a simile in his *Argonautica*, from the practice of sheep following their shepherd, to describe the mo-

keepers to follow the herds and flocks about, as in other places, or to attend them themselves, while grazing: the sheep, therefore, and the rest of the cattle which fed there, were trained to obey the sound of an horn: and paid so much obedience to these signals, that when any shepherd blew his horn in particular, the sheep belonging to him all hastened immediately to flock about him; but none of the rest.

He informs us, on the same occasion, of the method adopted to discriminate the large herds of swine, belonging to different keepers, yet feeding promiscuously in the extensive plains of Etruria and Cisalpine Gaul; which was similar to this: Οὐ γὰρ ἔπονται, says he, κατὰ πόδας οἱ συνοφορβοὶ τοῖς θρέμμασιν, ὥσπερ παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλησιν, ἀλλὰ προηγούνται φωνοῦντες τῇ βυκάνῃ κατὰ διάστημα, τὰ δὲ θρέμματα κατόπιν ἀκολουθεῖ, καὶ συντρέχει πρὸς τὴν φωνήν. The precision, with which these sounds were obeyed, would have astonished any one, who had never before observed their effect: ἐπειδὴν γὰρ τῶν νεμόντων ὁ μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος προάγει φωνῶν, ὁ δ' ἐπὶ ἕτερον ἀποκλίνει, αὐτὰ δὲ αὐτῶν χωρίζεται τὰ θρέμματα, καὶ κατακολουθεῖ ταῖς ἰδίαις βυκάναις μετὰ τοιαύτης προθυμίας, ὥστε μὴ δυνατὸν εἶναι βιάσασθαι μηδὲ κωλύσαι μηδενὶ τρόπῳ τὴν ὁρμὴν αὐτῶν.

tion of the first ship through the sea, accompanied by a crowd of admiring Tritons.

As countless flocks their rustic lord attend,
Sufficed with grass, and hastening to be penned,
Close at his footsteps, while he leads the way,
And on his sounding reed sweet pipes some pastoral lay.

Lib. i. 575—578.

It is a remark obviously suggested by the peculiarity of this custom, how much more it qualifies the relations of pastoral life to be the foundation of an allegory like the present. The relation of the sheep to the shepherd in itself is every where equally familiar, because the sheep, however necessary to man, has never been found in a state of natural wildness, but always in a state of domestication; in the possession of man, and in subjection to him. It is a relation too, of the most absolute dependency on the one hand, balanced in some degree by reciprocal benefits on the other: for the sheep is a timid, defenceless animal, which could not exist unless befriended and protected by man; for whose friendship and protection, however, she compensates by a variety of useful returns to her benefactor. And these are circumstances peculiar to the relation, which would render it universally an appropriate and intelligible emblem to personate a connexion of need and dependence on the one hand, and of advantage and convenience on the other. But would it, we may ask, have been equally well adapted to represent a connexion of mutual endearment and attachment, as well as of benefit and utility, except for this characteristic distinction, peculiar to the pastoral simplicity of the East? Sheep which are taught to know

their keeper, and require no inducement to follow him about, but the sight of his person and the sound of his voice, may easily be conceived to do this from a principle of affection, which disposes them to yield him a voluntary obedience. Sheep which are driven before their shepherd, so far seem to be subject to compulsion; and in conforming their movements to those of their keeper, to be actuated rather by fear, than by love.

THE MORAL.

In order to shew how the relations and characteristics of pastoral life may be applied, on the principle of analogy, to adumbrate the actual relations, which subsist between Christ and his people; and when so applied, how they are to be understood; something will require to be said, on the origin and nature of reciprocal rights and obligations generally, which we must afterwards accommodate to the particular relation of Christ and his church, and to the rights or duties entailed on the parties mutually concerned in that relation, with respect to each other. With this view we may begin, and reason consecutively, as follows.

The visible church of Christ, considered in reference to the particular individuals or members of which it consists, and not to the particular external limits by which it is locally bounded or circumscribed, is an actual society, composed of Jesus Christ as the object of faith and trust, on the one hand, and of Christians who profess to believe in, and to rely upon him, on the other. The relation subsisting between Christ and his church, in this sense, is consequently an actual, positive relation;

such as must, and does exist between the head of a particular society, on the one hand, and the subordinate members of it, on the other. It is such a relation, therefore, as may, and will subsist between any superior and independent party, and any inferior and dependent one, respectively; such, for example, as may and does subsist between a master as such, and his servants, composing together a common family; a king as such, and his subjects, composing together the complex of a nation.

Now the relation between parties of any kind, which is thus reciprocal, entitles and obliges each of them respectively, to some things from, and in behalf of, the other; which, so far as either of them is the *object* thereof, are called his *rights*, so far as either of them is their *subject*, are called his *duties*. The former the proper party has a claim to *receive*, the other he is bound to *render*; with this difference, that the rights to which he is entitled, must be obtained *from* the other party, the duties to which he is obliged, must be discharged *unto* and in behalf *of* the other. The rights, therefore, or claims of either party, regard himself—his duties or obligations, his partner in the relation: and there is this further connexion between these reciprocal rights and their returns, that the *claims* of the one party, in any such relation, are the *obligations* of the other, and the *duties* of the same party are the *rights* of the other.

As to the particular description of these mutual rights and obligations—they flow from the nature of the relation, by which they are entailed; and consequently they vary with its circumstances, and may be of as many kinds as there can be species of

a common or generic relation. The parties in every such relation must be either the same, in comparison of each other, or different: and if the same, must be equal and similar—if different, unequal and dissimilar—in all those respects which are most important to the relation itself. It is not necessary for us to say any thing at present of the relations between equal and similar parties, on which the relations of friendship properly so called, and of its various forms and modifications, are founded; because *those* never can represent the actual state of the case in the relation of two such unequal and dissimilar parties as Christ, on the one hand, and the members of his church, on the other.

Relations of equality in this sense, might imply the return of like for like, in the strictest acceptance of the terms. But as to relations of a contrary description, relations of inequality on both sides—that is, between a superior and independent party, and an inferior and dependent one, who are in any manner connected together—as there is a natural antecedent disparity between the parties themselves, so must there be a corresponding, consequent difference and dissimilitude, if not inequality, in the reciprocal rights and obligations, due *to* and *from* the one *by* the other.

It is very true, that there can be no just or permanent relation, even between dissimilar parties, as founded, notwithstanding, on mutual rights and expectations, where the return which is reciprocally due to the one and made by the other, is not something proportionable to the deserts and obligations of the party in either case. But there can be no relation, contracted originally between

parties dissimilar, and therefore comparatively unequal also, to which the rule of like for like can be strictly applicable; and the nature of the returns on either hand, however exactly the one may be adapted to the other in measure or degree, can be the same in kind. What could one person be previously competent to repay to another, in lieu of something received from him, which he did not previously possess himself? and what can parties, supposed to be different from the first, be supposed to possess in common, so as to return in common, one to the other, also? Much more, what could parties unlike or different from the first, who yet must be supposed to form an union with each other, and when united, to continue in this union, either from some proper motive and desire of their own, which prompted to the union, or from some proper sense of the benefit and advantage resulting from it, or from both—be considered to wish for in common, or to want in common, so as to expect and to receive in common, likewise?

It follows, therefore, that if neither of the parties in such a relation, can be supposed to desire the same thing as the other, prior to their union and connexion together; neither of them can be considered to desire or to expect the same thing from the other, subsequently to it: yet each of them must still be considered to desire and to expect something as properly his due, in consequence of the union, not less than before it. Now what can this be, but an equivalent or compensation? but something to be received in return, as an acknowledgment of something which has been previously bestowed? It is not possible, un-

der all circumstances, to return like for like; or the same thing both in kind and degree, which has previously been received. But it is possible, under almost any circumstances, to return one *equivalent* for another; and whatever may have been received, to acknowledge it by something in return, which though not the same with it in kind, yet shall be equal or commensurate to it in value and degree. In the case of mutual returns from unlike or dissimilar parties, the kind or nature of the return on either hand must differ, because the parties differ; but there is no reason why the one should not be proportionable, or nearly so, to the other, so as to satisfy the just expectations of one party, and to acquit the just obligations of the other. All that is necessary to this effect, seems to be the possession of some common standard, for measuring both the rights and the obligations of either party; a reference to which may at once decide, how much of one thing is justly to be expected, and justly to be returned, for how much of another.

But as to this common standard, what it is, and how to be applied—we know that in the ordinary transactions of social intercourse, where the product or effect of one kind of art or science is exchanged for that of another—the things which are given and received on each hand, being previously unlike and unequal—they are rendered commensurate, and are reduced to an equality, and the proportion of what is to be returned, to the value or worth of what is to be received, is determined, by a reference of both to the common standard of money: and therefore that it is an easy thing, in all such transactions, to settle the question of debtor and creditor—of mutual

rights and obligations—between unequal and dissimilar parties, to the satisfaction of both, and without giving occasion to disputes or misunderstandings of any kind. But as Aristotle, when reasoning on this subject, truly observes, there is no common standard, that may serve to adjust the claims of the relations of friendship, whether between equal or unequal, the same or dissimilar parties; nor consequently to decide at first sight, what is to be returned for what, or how much of one thing, for how much of another. In relations between dissimilar and unequal parties, as between a father and his children, a master and his family, a king and his subjects; the excess of personal benefit is entirely on the one side, the excess of personal superiority or dignity is entirely on the other. The benefits which redound from such relations, to the inferior parties, the children, the servants, the subjects—are infinitely greater than those which redound to the superior, the parents, the masters, the king, respectively: yet the personal dignity of the latter is just as much greater than the personal dignity of the former: one reason of which, though not the only one, is, that this very superiority of personal eminence and dignity on their side, is a consequence of their being the authors and sources of so much more personal benefit and advantage to the opposite parties in the relation, than they themselves derive from it.

It is obvious, then, that in such relations as these, the same thing neither is, nor can be, given and received by both the parties; though some proper and adequate return must be both to be given and received respectively, if the relation is to continue

in being, or the rights and obligations, reciprocally entailed by it, are to be duly respected on both sides. Nor does it make any difference to the necessity of such a reciprocity, in what way the relation between the parties was originally formed; whether by their own act and compact, as may be the case between masters and their families, kings and their subjects; or without any such act and compact, (on the part of one of the members in the relation at least,) as the consequence of mere natural friendship and connexion; which is the case between a father and his children. In whatever way the relation itself has once been established, the rights which are inseparable from it, become due on the one side; the obligations, which necessarily flow out of it, become binding on the other.

In a relation of this kind, then, where the personal dignity of one of the parties, measured even by the extent of the obligations conferred upon the other, is so much greater on the one hand; and the personal advantage of the other, though inferior in personal dignity, is so much greater on the other; when we would estimate the kind or degree of the return, which is due from the inferior to the superior party, this difference of personal desert and personal benefit respectively, must strictly be taken into account. Nor will any return be just and reasonable, which does not make up for that difference, and render the superior party as much a gainer in one respect, as he is a loser in another; which does not presuppose the inferior party as much indebted in some respects, as benefitted in others. It is not, indeed, to be denied, that the mutual advantage of both the parties is more or less consulted in every

such relation; since without the desire originally, and the participation afterwards by each of them, of some good effect from the relation, no such relation either would have been formed at first, or could subsequently continue to subsist. The good therefore, even of the superior parties, as well as that of the inferior, is no doubt involved in the objects and effects of such relations: but not to the same degree. No one will dispute the fact, that kings are capable of deriving benefits from their subjects, masters from their servants, and fathers or parents from their children; but who also will deny, that the advantages of which the former are, or have been the causes to the latter, are much greater than any thing which they either do, or can receive from them, in return?

If then, the returning of like for like, or of one equivalent for another, is essential to the integrity and continuance of friendship, under all its various relations; both justice and equity and the necessity of the case require that the inferior party, who contracts so much more of a common obligation, by partaking so much more largely in a common benefit, the consequence of the relation—should return proportionally so much more of something else; of which, though mutually interchanged between them, it is yet in his power to bestow the greater share. Now what is this, but the common feeling of love and attachment; which both contributes to form such relations at first, and cements them together and keeps them from being dissevered, when formed, not less than the sense of a common need and dependency beforehand, or the experience of a common benefit afterwards?

Between parties so connected together, and related to each other, as superiors in one respect and inferiors in another—superiors in personal merit, inferiors in personal advantage—there is no means of equalizing the existing disparity, and providing alike for the just rights and expectations of both the parties, except by taking care that the excess of personal feeling, on the one hand, shall be exactly proportional, if possible, to the excess of personal desert, on the other; and the defect of personal advantage as accruing out of the relation, to the superior party, be made up by a corresponding degree of such sentiments as are exclusively proper for the obliged party, in return for exclusive obligations. I say, if possible; for some feelings there are, in which the superior party in such relations, however much he might in justice deserve, or be bound to be outdone by the inferior, cannot be so. The child, perhaps, can never love the parents more than the parents love the child, however reasonable it may appear that he should. But other feelings there are, in return for obligations conferred, which are compatible with the relation of the inferior party only, yet may be something like a just and satisfactory equivalent for the claims and expectations even of the superior himself. Such are, in an eminent degree, the returns of gratitude, honour, esteem, veneration, and reverence. The idea of these in the superior towards the inferior party, would be preposterous and absurd; but in the inferior they seem to be the only appropriate tribute, which he is capable of rendering to the superior personal dignity of the other party; the only appropriate acknowledgment and requital, which he can make for superior personal

obligations, that can never be adequately repaid ; much less, so repaid in kind. It is just and reasonable, therefore, that the superior party in such relations, should be honoured, obeyed, and revered—and if possible, loved and cherished too—by the inferior, in a degree proportionable to the disparate value and magnitude of the benefit resulting to both, in virtue of their relation to each other, which though divided in some proportion with the superior, yet redounds to the inferior in particular.

Now the relation existing between Christ and his church is a relation entirely of the unequal kind. It is the relation of parties, incommensurate in personal dignity ; for it is that of the Son of God, on the one hand, and of the children of men, on the other—between whom, what equality of personal dignity can possibly exist ? It is the relation of parties, incommensurate in the degree of the utility of which the one is the cause to the other ; for it is that of the Redeemer and of his redeemed—between whom, in regard to the mutual advantages which each of them derives, as the consequences of such a relation, what parity of ratio can possibly hold good ? It is a relation, then, in which the excess of personal merit is entirely on the one side, and the excess of personal benefit is entirely on the other ; in which the superior party can never personally receive an adequate return, much less an adequate return in kind, for the blessings which he confers on the inferior—and the inferior can never be personally discharged from his proper obligations to the superior, by a full return, much less by a full return in kind.

It is a relation, too, in contracting which both the parties concerned in it, however dissimilar in other respects, agree eminently in being voluntary, and acting of their own accord. The part which Christ has taken (and still takes) in the business of human redemption, and by which he is placed in the peculiar relation of the proper head of his church, was freely undertaken, and freely discharged: and the reciprocal obligations which every individual Christian, whom baptism has admitted into the privileges of the Christian covenant, and the relation to Christ of a member of his church, contracts (and still acknowledges) upon his side, are equally voluntary and unconstrained; being pledged in his behalf, at first, by the deliberate act of others, who were empowered to bind him to them, and when he was arrived at years of discretion, and able to judge of their nature, and to take the responsibility of them upon himself, being subsequently reenforced and confirmed by his own.

The relation of Jesus Christ to his church, then, is one, in which there is no possibility of any return's being made by the correlative, but inferior parties, in the least degree adequate to the prodigious and disproportionate value of all those benefits which he, as the superior party, has conferred upon them—except the moral return of gratitude and affection, honour and reverence, faith and obedience; nor consequently any means of respecting the just rights, and satisfying the just expectations of the superior party, except on the principle of an equivalent or compensation, by one thing rendered instead of another received; though but an imperfect equivalent, and an inadequate compensation, after all.

Their love and attachment, their gratitude, reverence, and obedience, are the only recompense which the members of his church are capable of making to their Lord and Saviour Christ, in acknowledgment of what is due to him from them; but even the utmost possible degree of such feelings towards him on their part, would still be no strict and sufficient compensation for the number, variety, and greatness of the blessings which he is the author of to them. The goodness of God, however, deals with his creatures in this respect, as in every other, not according to the terms of a rigid account, nor up to the precise extent of their own obligations, but with an equitable allowance for the necessity of the case, and the degree of their proper ability; requiring from them all that they are competent, though not so much as they are bound, to repay to their Benefactor; and resting satisfied with the homage and gratitude, the faith and obedience of the redeemed, in behalf of their Redeemer, when these are as sincere and perfect as they themselves can render them, though far, very far, inferior to the transcendency of *his* deserts, and to the intensity of *their own* obligations.

Nor does it make any difference to the nature of these reciprocal rights and duties, that the relation between Christ and his church, as it subsists in the present life, is strictly a spiritual relation. The same obligations may be contracted, and the same inability to discharge them, on the part of the persons obliged, may subsist, in that case, as well as in any other like one. It follows only, that the benefits of which the subordinate parties partake, as by virtue of a spiritual relation, must be spiritual themselves; and the returns to which they become indebted

thereby, but which they can never fully repay—their gratitude, their love, their trust and obedience—must be spiritually conformed; that is, be such as are proper to be given and received by the parties in a spiritual relation, respectively; by the inferior, in acknowledgment of spiritual obligations—by the superior, in return for spiritual benefits.

If now, this spiritual relation between Christ and his church, with the consequent rights and obligations contracted by both the parties in it, were to be figuratively described, by any sensible representation that would only apply to it with the requisite truth and closeness; what more appropriate or obvious one could be selected, than the relation of the shepherd and the sheep? The relation of the head of an household to his family, or of a king to his subjects; both of which (but especially the former) are elsewhere employed to express the same idea—may be more than figuratively applicable to the fact of such a relation; may be even literally true thereof. For if the relation between Christ and his church is not actually that of a master and his family, or of a king and his subjects, it would not be easy to say, what it is. But the relation of a shepherd to his flock, if applied to it at all, can be applied only *symbolically*; though still, to be justly so applied, it must be on the principle of a conceivable, appropriate analogy.

The human mind delights in the discovery of unseen resemblances, between things apparently the most distinct; and in clothing abstract ideas under the images of sense, which possess any perceptible affinity to them, whether real or imaginary. The metaphors which are borrowed, with this view, from

the occupations of common life, are necessarily the most perspicuous and intelligible; and those which are derived from the images of rural or pastoral life, for various reasons are among not only the most simple and familiar, but the most pleasing and popular of all.

The spiritual relation of Christ to his church is merely metaphorically the relation of the shepherd to his sheep: but the foundation of the metaphor is natural and obvious—the application of it is close and striking. There are many circumstances in which the particulars even of this spiritual relation, may appear to be identified with those of the actual relation in question. The relative inferiority of one party—the comparative superiority of the other; the closeness of dependency, the constant want of support and defence, on the one hand—the unremitting exertion of care, protection, and tutelary vigilance, on the other; the affection and attachment of the inferior—the tenderness of regard on the part of the superior; safe keeping, security, pasture, and maintenance, the rights on the one side—personal reliance on the proper object, obedience, gratitude, the obligations on the other; all which are circumstances, which characterise or may easily be conceived to characterise, the reciprocal relations of the shepherd and the sheep, are scarcely less applicable, and less characteristic when applied, to the spiritual relations even of Christ and his church.

When this symbolical medium is employed to describe such a spiritual relation, the terms or images which enter into the description, and might be literally understood of the pastoral relation, have been now changed in their meaning; and must be

supposed to stand for a spiritual counterpart, answering on the principle of analogy, to the real or sensible image by the name of which it is personified. The idea of the *fold*, which is inseparable from that of the *flock*, is now to be restricted to the sense of the external limits of the visible church—which is likewise inseparable from the notion of an existing society of professing Christians. The idea of the flock, comprehended in the fold, must be supposed to stand for the congregation of the visible church, the complex of the society of professing Christians; the notion of any particular sheep, as an individual member of the flock, implies the relation of any one Christian, as a particular member of the general congregation of the church of Christ. The idea of the shepherd, as the master or keeper of the flock, answers to Jesus Christ, as the head and curator of all the church. And as there can be only one such master or keeper, in reference to the same flock; so there can be but one head or lord of the church, to whom this title of their shepherd, whether literally or spiritually, of right applies. Christ, therefore, as the exclusive head and master of the church, stands both to the whole of his church, considered as his flock in general, and to every individual believer, considered as one member thereof, in the identical relation of their shepherd. And as the true master and sole owner of this flock, he stands distinguished from every other person, who should claim to be regarded in the same relation with respect to the sheep; and as the true members of the flock of Christ, faithful and obedient Christians are discriminated from spurious and false believers, in respect of the shep-

herd; to whom, by being mixed up indiscriminately together at present, both might appear to stand in a common, and an equal relation.

The spiritual benefits, likewise, which are derived from the head of the church to faithful believers, as to his members, in consequence of their intimate relation to himself, are now adumbrated by the actual advantages which accrue to the flock, from the care and protection of their keeper; and the returns of affection and obedience, which instinct or habit has taught the flock to make to their shepherd, in acknowledgment of such benefits, must be understood of the attachment and gratitude, the duty, obedience, and reverence, which faithful Christians are bound to render to Christ; as the only recompense *they* can bestow, for the inestimable blessings which *he* has conveyed and assured to them.

These various conclusions, the consideration of the allegory itself, to which we may now proceed, will much more effectually illustrate, than any thing which has yet been said.

THE INTERPRETATION.

The whole of the discourse, from ver. 1—18 of the tenth chapter of St. John, is divisible into two parts, or sections; the division having been made by a pause in the delivery of it, recorded at verse 6. It was resumed, therefore, in verse 7. Yet there is no reason to suppose that this resumption was designed merely to explain what had just been said; however unintelligible to those who heard it, without some further explanation, even that might appear to be. If we cannot regard what follows as entirely independent upon what had preceded; still it is

merely the continuation and enlargement of a former topic; not an interpretation or explanation of what had recently been said.

There is this difference, however, in the character of the two parts respectively, that the former is an unmixed allegory throughout, the latter is not; the former contains no personal allusion to the speaker, but the latter does. The former is directed, as it will appear hereafter, to one or two purposes, which, though naturally connected themselves, serve properly as a preliminary to what follows; and may be said to supply the data and foundation of the rest of the discourse.

At present, what we may remark upon first, is the number, variety, and circumstantiality of the images which occur in both parts of the allegory; all of them applicable in their first intention to the pastoral relation; yet forming collectively a parabolic description, which is to be spiritually understood and interpreted, throughout. We have allusions in both parts, to the constitution of an ancient fold, and consequently to a legitimate and an illegitimate mode of gaining admission into it; the former descriptive of the rightful owner and shepherd of the flock, the latter of all who differ from him in that capacity. There is the same reference in both to the peculiar training of the sheep, by which they were habitually taught to recognise the voice of their keeper, and to follow him from place to place. We have the shepherd and proprietor of the flock specified as a real character, and as distinguished by real personal qualities, on the one side; and thieves, robbers, and hirelings, as equally real, and just as much distinguished by pro-

per individual characteristics, on the other. There is the same allusion to the rights and duties of the pastoral relation, as reciprocally acknowledged and mutually discharged by each of the parties in it, towards the other: admission into the fold, protection from danger, and maintenance, as the rights of the sheep, and acknowledged by the shepherd; personal attachment to himself, reliance on his care, obedience to his will, as the returns which are due to the shepherd, and cheerfully repaid by the sheep.

In the midst of this profusion of figurative images, our Saviour has distinctly appropriated to their true sense only the personal character of the shepherd and owner of the flock, and the personal character of those opposed to the owner and shepherd, in the capacity of thieves or robbers, and of hirelings. The former he has fixed to himself; the latter, whether as the same or as distinct in each instance, he has applied first, to all such as came (*πρὸ αὐτοῦ*)—apparently, “before himself:” and secondly, to all “whose own the sheep were not.”

That he speaks, therefore, of real characters, when he speaks of such persons, seems to be as little questionable, as that he speaks of a real character, when he speaks of himself; and that he intends to oppose them to himself, even as real characters, and to specify that opposition by the possession of such personal qualities on their part, as were most remote from his own, in that *one* characteristic respect of the *rightful* proprietor and the *true* shepherd of the sheep; is just as little to be doubted. But who these persons were, or should be, whether regarded as thieves and robbers, or as hirelings, does not appear; and therefore it is necessary we should

begin with endeavouring to ascertain : especially as it may perhaps be found, that with respect to both, certain misconceptions, chargeable partly on the inaccuracy of the received translation, have hitherto prevailed, which it is very desirable to correct. In labouring to clear up these points, I shall consider those who are spoken of as thieves and robbers, first; and afterwards, what is to be understood by the characters described as hirelings.

The eighth verse of the original, which contains the allusion in question, stands as follows; Πάντες ὅσοι πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἦλθον, κλέπται εἰσὶ καὶ λησταί· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἤκουσαν αὐτῶν τὰ πρόβατα : which is rendered in our English Bible; “All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers : but the sheep did not hear them :” a version apparently correct, if we except a slight inaccuracy in the last words; which it would have been more agreeable to the tense of the verb in the original, to render; “But the sheep *have* not *heard* them;” than, “But the sheep *did* not *hear* them.” On the same principle, indeed, we might venture to correct the former part also, by rendering it; “All that ever *have come* before me are thieves and robbers.” But whether with these alterations, or as it stands, this version cannot be allowed to express the meaning of the original; not so much from any apparent want of fidelity to the language employed by it, but from its inconsistency with the matter of fact, of which that language speaks. Nor is it impossible to render the original itself, in such a manner, as shall be at once both equally faithful to the words, and much more consistent with the real meaning, of the text.

A classical reader, who is acquainted with what

is called the frequentative sense of the aorist in Greek, and aware that when so used it is tantamount to the present tense; would not object even to the following version of the text, which merely proceeds on the supposition that the aorist in each instance here, is equivalent to the present: "As many soever as *come* ($\pi\rho\delta\ \epsilon\mu\sigma\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$), are thieves and robbers; but the sheep *hear* them not." I do not, however, propose this version, upon any such principle, as what I should wish to acquiesce in; for I believe both the aorists in the present instance, to be equivalent to the future, and not to the present.

It is well known to those who are familiar with the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially in their original language and in their prophetic parts; that according to the idiom of prophecy, even when speaking of the future, the past tenses are almost invariably substituted for the future. The reason of this substitution is founded in the nature of things, where human language is the medium employed in conveying the knowledge of the future—that is, in giving utterance to the conceptions of the divine mind. The simultaneous comprehension of time, in all its parts, is inseparable from the idea of omniscience. In the divine contemplation of the course of events, the prospect of the future is identified with that of the past; or rather, all distinctions of past and future, with regard to their peculiar subject-matter, are virtually obliterated, and every thing is present, every thing is passing, at once.

The idiom of prophecy, which speaks under the inspiration and guidance of such an omniscience, cannot fail to be modified and characterised accord-

ingly. Inverting the ordinary relations and associations of ideas with regard to the apprehension of events, it inverts the ordinary relations and constructions of language in speaking of them. At one time, anticipating the future—at another, recalling the past—it considers neither as what it is in itself, but each to be something equally distinct from, yet equally related to itself. It speaks historically where it should speak proleptically, and proleptically where it should speak historically: making the future appear as if already past; and the past as if still present, or yet to come.

The fact of this idiom might be established by the production of numerous instances of it, both from the Old Testament, and also from the New; but I consider it too regular and too familiar an usage, for any doubt to be reasonably entertained about it^h.

^h Justin M. Apologia, i. 63. l. 15: ὅταν δὲ (leg. forsan, ὅτι δὲ) τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα τὰ μέλλοντα γίνεσθαι ὡς ἤδη γενόμενα λέγει (leg. λέγει) . . . ὅπως ἀπολογία μὴ παρασχῆ τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν, καὶ τοῦτο διασαφήσομεν. τὰ πάντως ἐγνωσμένα γενησόμενα προλέγει ὡς ἤδη γενόμενα. And again: Dialog. 380. 3: ἔσθ' ὅτε δὲ καὶ λόγους ἐφθέγγετο περὶ τῶν ἀποβαίνειν μελλόντων, φθεγγόμενον αὐτοὺς ὡς τότε γινομένων ἢ καὶ γεγενημένων· ἦν τέχνην εἶν μὴ εἰδῶσιν οἱ ἐντυγχάνοντες, οὐδὲ παρακολουθῆσαι τοῖς τῶν προφητῶν λόγοις ὡς δεῖ δυνήσονται.

Rel. Sacre, i. 339. De Pantæno: ὁ Πανταῖνος δὲ ἡμῶν ἔλεγεν, ἀορίστως τὴν προφητείαν ἐκφέρειν τὰς λέξεις, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλείστον, καὶ τῷ ἐνεστῶτι ἀντὶ τοῦ μέλλοντος χρῆσθαι χρόνῳ, καὶ πάλιν τῷ ἐνεστῶτι ἀντὶ τοῦ παρῳρηκότος. Tertullian, i. 127. Contra Marcionem, iii. 5: Duas itaque causas prophetici eloquii adlego, agnoscendas abhinc adversariis nostris. unam, qua futura interdum pro jam transactis enunciantur. nam et divinitati competit, quæcunque decreverit, ut perfecta reputare, quia non sit apud illam differentia temporis, apud quam uniformem statum temporis dirigit æternitas ipsa. et divinationi prophetiæ magis familiare est, id quod prospiciat, dum prospicit, jam visum atque ita jam ex-

Every parable of the allegorical class, which we have hitherto considered or shall hereafter consider, might be cited as an instance in point to the fact of the enallage in question; illustrating the substitution of the language of narrative for the language of prediction, in the repeated delivery of a series of future truths, by terms strictly applicable only to past ones. There are two examples, however, of the idiom, to be met with in the gospel narrative, which I apprehend to be so remarkable in themselves, and so indisputable as cases in point; that I shall make no apology for citing each of them.

One of these occurs in St. Matthew's Gospel; where our Saviour is speaking of the death of Zacharias the son of Barachias; ὃν ἐφονεύσατε μεταξύ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίουⁱ: "Whom ye have slain between the sanctuary and the altar." I need not remind the reader, that he is addressing himself directly to the Scribes and Pharisees; and specifying this, as one of the instances of the *righteous* blood, that is, of the blood of the righteous *unjustly* shed, which should be visited on the heads of that generation. Now this death, both the reason of the thing, or necessity of the case, as deducible from the scope

punctum, id est omnimodo futurum, demonstrare, &c. Cf. Origen. ii. 540. B. Selecta in Psalmos. Chrysost. v. 116. B—C. in illud, Pater si possibile est. Hieronymus, ii. 703. *ad med.* Epp. Criticæ: In cunctis pene locis hanc habent Septuaginta consuetudinem, ut quod apud Hebræos in futurum ostenditur, hoc illi quasi jam factum et præteritum referant.

St. John might do the same, in translating our Saviour's words on the present occasion, into Greek, even though he himself had spoken in the future.

ⁱ Matt. xxiii. 35. Harm. P. iv. 77.

and context of the whole denunciation; and the historical testimony to the matter of fact, supplied by the Jewish historian, Josephus; as well as the opinions of many judicious commentators; concur in requiring to be understood of a *future* fact—the death of Zacharias, son of Baruch—a *righteous*, and certainly an *innocent* person; whom the seditious zealots, the true scholars and disciples of these Scribes and Pharisees, actually put to death, in open mockery of law, religion, and justice, under the very circumstances, as there is every reason to presume, specified by the prophecy; “between the sanctuary and the altar^k.” If this be the case, the tense of the

^k The only two historical personages known of or mentioned in the Old Testament, to whom the allusion to the death of Zacharias, Matt. xxiii. 35. on this occasion, and in the parallel place of St. Luke, xi. 51. (Harm. P. iv. 31.) on a former occasion, can be supposed *a priori* to apply, are the high priest of that name, in the reign of Joash, whose death is related 2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22: and Zechariah, the prophet, contemporary with the reign of Darius Hystaspis, after the return from captivity.

It is an insuperable objection to the supposition that the first of these is meant, that that Zacharias was the son of Jehoiada, not the son of Baruch or Barachias. Nor does it appear from the Old Testament, that any of his predecessors in the priesthood, from whom he was lineally descended, bore this name; so as to give occasion to his being designated the son of Barachias, as being his grandson, great grandson, or the like.

If it is not a similar ground of objection, on the one hand, to the supposition that the prophet Zechariah is meant, that neither was he the son of any Barachias, (see Zech. i. 1. and Ezra v. 1.) it is a still greater objection, on the other, that we do not know he was ever put to death, much less under such circumstances as are supposed by our Saviour: and to assume this as a matter of fact, and to reason from it accordingly, in confirmation or illustration of the allusion, is neither more nor less than a *petitio principii*.

Epiphanius,

verb which speaks of that death, as already past,

Epiphanius, i. 333. B. *Contra Marcionistas*, reproaches Marcion with suppressing in his edition of the text of St. Luke, every thing relating to the blood of Abel, of Zacharias, and of all the prophets; though it was to be found in every copy of the Gospel. He does not say on what grounds Marcion justified this omission. Probably, not only his peculiar opinions respecting the God of the Old Testament, but the historical objections to the statement, might be one reason; because of the difficulty of proving from history that Zacharias in particular did so perish, as is supposed in the allusion to his death.

Origen (iii. 465. B. *Comm. in Matt. tom. x. 18.*) has nothing more satisfactory to propose, in illustration of the words of our Lord, than a conjecture that the account of the death of Zacharias, in question, though not contained in scripture, was related in some apocryphal writing or other; whence our Lord quoted it. And he asserts still more plainly, directly after: (848. D. *Comm. in Matt. series secundum veterem interpretationem, 28.*) Fertur ergo in scripturis non manifestis, serratum esse Isaiam, et Zachariam occisum, et Ezechielem: understanding of course Zacharias the prophet, not Zacharias the high priest. It is very possible that such an account of the death of Zacharias might actually be on record in some apocryphal writing or other; as there is one in the *Ascensio Isaiaæ vatis*, of the peculiar mode in which Isaiah was put to death. But even if there were, it can prove nothing in confirmation of the fact, against the silence of scripture, Josephus, &c. It is probable, too, that any such apocryphal production, relating to Zacharias, was still the composition of a Christian of some sort or other, as well as that which gives the account of the martyrdom of Isaiah; which I shall endeavour to shew hereafter was the work of a Valentinian. Almost all these apocryphal productions, whatever name they bore, and to whatever subject they related, were the compositions of Christians, or of writers professing themselves to be Christians: and almost all were composed about the end of the first, or the beginning of the second century, after the Christian era.

But though the fact of the death of Zacharias the prophet, could be historically attested, on the best evidence, to have been such as is supposed in the instances alluded to; still we cannot,

“ Whom ye have slain ; ” is clearly equivalent to the future ; “ Whom ye shall slay . ”

without great inconsistency, conclude that this death, or any similar event, more ancient than it, was what our Lord could have had in view : and that for the following reasons.

He is speaking both Luke xi. 47—51. and Matt. xxiii. 29—36. of the sin of blood-guiltiness—the sin contracted by the guilt of blood unjustly shed—and he is speaking of it as a *progressive* and *cumulative* sin ; a sin contracted by *all* the guilt of *all* the blood unjustly shed, within such and such limits, at different periods of time. One of these limits is defined by the instance of the death of Abel ; the other, by that of the death of Zacharias, the son of Barachias ; the one, the first instance of blood unjustly shed within the whole period in question, the other, the last.

The whole guilt of this sin so contracted, and at the different periods of the entire duration comprehended between these extremes, should be visited, it is said, on the heads of one generation—the generation then living, when the words were spoken ; the generation represented by the Scribes and Pharisees, the parties addressed in this denunciation of woes from first to last. If then, the progressive and cumulative guilt of righteous blood—the guilt of *all* the blood unjustly shed from the beginning of the world, was to be visited upon the heads of that *one* generation, the contemporaries of our Saviour himself ; the necessity of the case requires, that as the guilt of the death of Abel was the *first* instance of the kind which could be visited on them, so the guilt of the death of Zacharias, son of Barachias, must have been the *last*. They could suffer for no such guilt contracted before the time of Abel, and they could suffer for none contracted later than the time of this Zacharias.

Now what would be the consequence of this conclusion, if the death of the Zacharias in question was that either of Zacharias the son of Jehoiada, the Jewish high-priest, in the days of Joash, eight hundred and fifty years before the birth of Christ : or that of Zacharias the prophet, five hundred and twenty years before the same time ?

In the first place ; were there any instance of blood unjustly shed by the forefathers of these men, between either of those

The other instance occurs in the Gospel of St.

periods and the birth of Christ, the guilt of that blood in particular, could not be what was to be resented upon the heads of these men in particular. Yet why should it not, we might ask, with just as much reason, as the guilt of any such blood, before the time of either Zacharias, but subsequent to the death of Abel—which was to be so visited?

In the next place; in the whole course of this progressive accumulation of guilt, on account of the sin of blood unjustly shed, beginning with the death of Abel and ending with that of Zacharias, which was to be visited on this one generation; the only instance of such guilt, which they themselves had really contracted, and for which they themselves would be *a priori* entitled to punishment, will be the part not laid to their charge: I mean the guilt contracted by such specific instances of the sin in question, on their part, as the death of John the Baptist; the crucifixion of our Lord; the martyrdom of so many of the apostles, and of the other evangelists and professors of Christianity. But it is utterly inconceivable, that taking into account a progressive and cumulative amount of sin so committed, and consisting in such instances as these; all that their fathers in particular had done; nay all that any race or description of mankind in general had done, of this kind, should be laid to the charge of this one generation—yet that what they themselves had done to swell the amount of the sin, and to aggravate the enormity of the guilt, should be altogether excused, and left out of sight.

The truth is, this *one* generation was to be charged with *all* the guilt of their forefathers; nay with the guilt of the whole world before their time—contracted by the sin of blood unjustly shed; because they themselves had so much more to answer for of the same kind, in their own persons, than either their forefathers, or any generation of mankind before them, could have had. It was because of the treatment which John the Baptist, which our Lord himself, (the Son of God, too, be it remembered,) which his apostles, and all the martyrs to Christianity, either had experienced, or should experience, at their hands; that they should be made responsible to the divine justice for every outrage of the same kind, ever committed even before their own time; that the crime of their own guilt in par-

John; Ἐγὼ ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς θερίζειν ὃ οὐχ ὑμεῖς κεκοπιά-

ticular should be resented on their own heads, with a degree and intensity of vengeance, not less considerable than if in their guilt were summed up and comprehended the entire amount of all such guilt, which the world had ever contracted; and in their persons, as the sufferers of the punishment due to that guilt, every race of criminals, equally guilty of the same offences, and equally deserving of vengeance in consequence of them, were collected and concentrated also.

That they were not to be excused from the guilt of personal crimes of their own, so contracted, in the apprehension of our Lord, is quite evident from his language. The mission of prophets or teachers, wise men and scribes, as St. Matthew expresses it; or that of teachers and apostles, according to St. Luke; can be understood of the preliminary sending to them of none but the evangelists and emissaries of Christianity; and the treatment which these should experience at their hands, in consequence of their mission—killing—crucifying—scourging in synagogues—and persecuting from city to city—is such treatment as neither could be, nor was, experienced by any, at the hands of their unbelieving countrymen of this day, but Christian ministers and evangelists.

These words of our Saviour were spoken, as I apprehend, on the Wednesday in Passion-week, April 3. U. C. 783. A. D. 30: Jerusalem was finally taken and destroyed by the Romans, on Sunday, August 31, U. C. 823, A. D. 70, exactly forty years after. But the war itself with the Romans, began soon after the Passover, U. C. 819, A. D. 66, four years before. About a time, which coincided with the month of November, in the ensuing year, U. C. 820, A. D. 67, thirty-seven years after the passion, Josephus gives us an account of an act of the zealots, at that time, and ever after, undisputed masters of Jerusalem, by which they put to death a person, whom he denominates Zacharias, the son of Baruch; that is, Zacharias, the son of Barachias; the circumstances of which were such, as there is every reason to suppose, would accord to the description of it given beforehand by our Lord. B. iv. v. 4.

It was the blood of an *innocent* or *righteous* person; of a person expressly selected by the zealots for their victim, on ac-

κατε' ἄλλοι κεκοπιάκασι, καὶ ὑμεῖς εἰς τὸν κόπον αὐτῶν εἰσε-

count of his probity; a person, whose innocence was so notorious, (especially as to the crimes laid by his accusers to his charge,) that a sanhedrim packed by the zealots, and purposely composed of creatures of their own, taken too from the lowest of the people, in order that he might pass through the mockery of a trial, and be condemned with the form and semblance at least of law; notwithstanding the purpose for which they had been appointed to sit upon him, unanimously pronounced him innocent. It was, therefore, an instance of blood *unjustly* shed; of blood sacrificed by the wickedness of men, in defiance of justice, of innocence, of shame, of religion, of humanity. It was blood too shed by the *zealots*; that is, by those very men who carried to their greatest extreme, the principles of the Scribes and Pharisees—in their supposed zeal for the honour of God, and their attachment to the law and the temple, which actuated them in their hostility to Christianity. It was blood too shed by the *sword*, not by *stoning*; according to the proper import of the verb, *ἐφονεύσατε*, which speaks of it. It was blood shed in the *midst* of the *temple*; the zealots, after Zacharias had been acquitted by the sanhedrim, having driven them out of their court, with kicks and blows; and then fallen on their victim, in the midst of the temple, and despatched him with their daggers.

True it is, Josephus does not expressly say, he perished in the space between the *θυσιαστήριον* (which means the altar of burnt offering, in the priests' court of the temple) and the *οἶκος* or *ναὸς*, (which means the sanctuary, answering to the ancient tabernacle, the immediate residence of the Deity, and accessible by none but the priests.) He had just been tried, however, in the usual court of the sanhedrim; which is said to have stood on the confines of the priests' court, and the men's. That he perished therefore in the priests' court, is very confidently to be presumed: and it is not less probable that he perished at the altar itself, in the position supposed by our Saviour, "between the altar and the sanctuary." He might have taken refuge at the altar; when, notwithstanding his acquittal by his judges, he perceived his enemies still bent on his destruction.

Josephus, it is to be remembered, was not at Jerusalem when this transaction happened, nor does he give an account of it

ληλύθατε¹: “I have sent you to reap that on which
 “ye have not laboured: others have laboured (*on*
 “*it*;) and ye are entered upon their labour.” We
 might challenge any one, as I have observed else-
 where^m, to shew that this declaration can possibly
 be understood of any mission of our Lord’s disci-
 ples—much more of any mission of his apostles
 (whose order was not yet in being)—which had
 hitherto taken place. But if it cannot be under-
 stood of any past mission, it must be understood
 of some future one: in which case, would we render
 the words according to their true prophetic mean-
 ing, it should be to this effect: “I *shall* send you to
 “reap that on which ye *shall* not *have* laboured:
 “others *shall* *have* laboured (*on it*); and ye *shall*
 “*enter* upon their labour.”

It is a description of the future errand of the dis-
 ciples of our Lord, in their proper capacity of his
 apostles, first and most immediately among the Jews
 in particular: to prepare whom for the dispensation
 of the gospel, as sometime to be carried into effect
 by the instrumentality of the apostles, had been the
 proper and personal business of John the Baptist, be-

from his own observation. He was then a prisoner in the hands
 of the Romans; and consequently in some things his narrative
 of the story may not be so particular, as might have been wished.

Lastly, there is no one similar act of the zealots, left on record,
 after this time to the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem,
 April, U. C. 823. A. D. 70: no one such gross instance of the
 mockery of justice and right, by the murder of an innocent per-
 son, as this; though there are a variety of horrible excesses and
 outrages in general, of which the same party are said to have
 been guilty.

¹ John iv. 38. Harm. P. ii. 15.

^m See my Dissertations, vol. ii. Diss. 7. p. 209—215.

fore our Saviour; and was to be that of our Saviour himself, after him. The past tenses, therefore, in these propositions, *have sent; have laboured; have entered*: are all equivalent to the future ones; *shall send; shall have laboured; shall enter*.

Tried by this rule, if the matter of fact alluded to in the present instance were something still future, and the whole passage were purely prophetic, without the least mixture of history; what objection would there be to rendering the past tenses, *have come; have heard*—here also, by the corresponding ones: *shall come; shall hear*? “As many soever as *shall come* $\pi\rho\delta\ \epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$, are thieves and robbers: but the sheep *shall not hear* them.” If any difficulty still remains, it concerns the meaning of the words, $\pi\rho\delta\ \epsilon\mu\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$: as to which, if the rest of the sentence in which they stand, is to be rendered as a future proposition, it follows that any such version of them as that which is expressed in the received translation, is excluded by the necessity of the case. “As many soever as *shall come before me*,” referred to the time when the words were spoken, would evidently be an absurdity, which the proposition can never be supposed to convey.

But it is known to classical readers, that among other significations of the Greek preposition, which is here rendered by our preposition, “before,” the sense of place or substitution is not inadmissible, any more than that of time; in other words, that it may stand as well for the Latin *pro*, as for the Latin *ante*; and may be rendered in English, by “for” or “instead of,” as well as by “before.” There might

ⁿ Instances of this use of $\pi\rho\delta$ in the sense of $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\iota$, must have occurred to every one, who is familiar with the Greek classics.

Thus

be just as much reason, therefore, *a priori*, to translate the words, by “for me,” or, “instead of me,” as, by “before me.” Laying, consequently, this conclusion along with the former, respecting the future sense of the past tenses employed in the same proposition, we might contend that the version of the terms should be; “As many soever as shall come “instead of me, are thieves and robbers; but the “sheep shall not hear them (*or* not obey them):” and on the same supposition as before, that the matter of fact alluded to is future, we might still more justly contend, that no other version of the words will suit the sense, except this. But as the force of this conclusion depends principally on the truth of the assumption, that the passage actually contains a prophecy; we must endeavour to establish this assump-

Thus Aristot. *Politica*, i. 11. 4: καὶ ὡσπερ ὄργανον πρὸ ὀργάνων πᾶς ὁ ὑπηρέτης. Herod. i. 152: εἶλοντο πρὸ πάντων λέγειν τὸν Φωκαέα. Xenoph. *Memorabilia*, ii. iv. 7: ταῦτα ὁ φίλος πρὸ τοῦ φίλου ἐξήρκεσεν. It seems to me to be so used even in John v. 7: ἄλλος πρὸ ἐμοῦ καταβαίνει.

πρὸ τῶν τοιούτων χρῆ λόγων δάκνειν στόμα.

Æschyl. *apud incertam fabulam*.

ἄπελθ' ἐρῶ γὰρ καὶ πρὸ τῶνδε, κ. τ. λ.

Ædip. Colon. 811.

This sense of πρὸ appears especially in composition; as in *προφήτης*.

Διὸς προφήτης δ' ἐστι Λοξίας πατρός. Æschyl. *Eumenides*. 19.

ἐγὼ προφήτης σοι λόγων γενήσομαι. Eurip. *Bacchæ*, 192.

And in *πρόδουλος*.

ὑπαί τις ἀρβύλας

λῦοι τάχος πρόδουλος ἔμβασιν ποδός.

Æschyl. *Agam*. 953.

And in *πρόπυργος*.

πρόπυργοι θυσίαι. *Ibid*, 1179.

In like manner we might cite *πρόβοσκος*, *πρόβουλος*, *πρόδικος*, *πρόμαντις*, and many other words.

tion on the proper grounds, which entitle it to credit: and this I shall accordingly proceed to do.

First, then, if the text contains no prophecy, nor consequently any reference to something future, it must be simply historical; and therefore must refer entirely to the past. It will follow that the persons described by it as thieves and robbers, were persons who came before the time of Christ. It will follow also, that they were persons who had ceased to be before the time of Christ; for it will not surely be contended that they existed *still*, or at any period contemporary with that of the appearance and ministry of Jesus Christ. They were persons, therefore, who had both come and gone, both appeared and disappeared, before the time of Christ; who had consequently, no existence, nor were any where to be seen, during or after the time of Christ.

Now, was this the case, (nor do I see how it can be shewn, on these principles, to be otherwise,) the simple historical reference to the existence of such persons, had it been consistent and regular, would have stood thus: "As many soever as came before me *were* thieves and robbers; but the sheep *did* not *hear* them." The use of a contrary mode of speaking of them, according to which though their appearance is referred to as past, their existence is implied to be present, and the nature of their personal characters to be even *then* notorious; is something more akin to the prophetic anticipation of the future, than the purely historical recapitulation of the past. At least, the occurrence of the present tense in any part of the sentence, is a greater objection to considering it wholly historical, than the

occurrence of the past tenses also, to considering it wholly prophetic.

Nor is this all. It seems too evident to require any proof, that in alluding to these men, whosoever they were and whensoever they appeared, our Saviour alludes to them in direct opposition to himself: and as was naturally to be expected from such a reference, the point of the opposition—the contrast of character, between himself and them—turns on the presence and absence of the very same personal qualities in himself and in them, respectively; on the truth of certain characteristics, as applied to himself, and on the falsehood of the same, as applied to them; on both too, as derived immediately from their different relative positions to one and the same object of correlation—those who are called the sheep. For example; he fixes upon them the character and relation of strangers to the sheep, on himself those of one familiar to them, and well-known by them: and as a consequence of these two things respectively, he affirms of them, the instinctive abhorrence of the sheep, of himself his intuitive recognition by them. He stigmatizes their mode of procuring admission into the fold, as intrusive, violent, or surreptitious; he characterises his own, as regular, peaceable, and open: he attaches to them the name of thieves and robbers, who have no right in the property, no interest in the welfare of the sheep; he ascribes to himself the name of their true shepherd, their lawful owner, their natural guardian and protector. He imputes to the former a corresponding end or effect of their coming in such their proper capacity, viz. the plunder and destruction of the flock; and to himself a result or design

of his own appearance, just as natural—the safety, well-being, and abundant maintenance of the flock.

It is impossible for any distinctions of character to be more close, more personal, more individual, yet more opposed than these. Now the character and relation of the shepherd, on the one side, allegorically understood, were the character and relation of the Messiah: and those of the sheep which answered to them, on the other, were the character and relation of believers in him. The personal attributes, then, which our Lord ascribes to himself, being all of them attributes of the shepherd, and those the attributes of the *true* shepherd of the sheep, are necessarily the attributes of the *true* Messiah; and the personal attributes, opposed to these, which he fixes on all besides, being so many attributes opposed to those of the true shepherd, and therefore of the true Messiah, are so many attributes of those who were not in any sense the true shepherd, nor therefore the true Messiah. That is, they are so many attributes of *false* Messiahs.

The men, therefore, of whom he was speaking, were spoken of as opposed to and as differing from himself, not in any capacity indiscriminately, but in the special capacity of *false* Messiahs, as opposed to and differing from the *true*. If then, they were persons who had appeared before the time of our Saviour, it follows that false Messiahs had appeared before the time of our Saviour; and if they had both appeared and disappeared before his time, false Messiahs had both appeared and disappeared, both existed and ceased to exist, before the time of the true. Now let us consider what difficulties would

result from this conclusion, or what objections might reasonably be urged against its truth.

In the first place, the surprise and consternation of Herod, and of all Jerusalem with him, upon learning, from the arrival and declarations of the eastern magi, the tidings of the birth of the Christ^o; which are natural and consistent enough, if this was the first intimation of any such event that the world had yet witnessed; become much less probable, if the appearance of persons, professing to be the Messiah, whether truly or untruly, whether more in number or fewer, whether a longer time before or a shorter, was already matter of fact and general notoriety. The behaviour of the king on the contrary, both at first and throughout the course of the business, is a presumptive proof, that no such event as the birth of the Christ had yet been heard of, or was supposed to have happened.

Again, the title of *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, “He that is coming,” or “that shall come^p,” which was ordinarily applied to the Messiah in the language of the times, and seems in fact, both before and after the birth of our Saviour, to have been the regular mode of describing him—could not in the nature of things, have been applied to any person but one whom all expected indeed to come, but nobody knew as yet to be come. If it be understood, indeed, to describe also the true Messiah, when he should appear, as we must suppose it to do—it does not necessarily prove that false Messiahs might not have appeared and passed away, before the appearance even of the

^o Matt. ii. 1—12. Harm. P. i. 12.

^p Matt. xi. 3. Luke vii. 19. Harm. P. iii. 8.

true: it would only prove, that how many soever might have appeared, they had none of them produced any effect; none of them met with any success; none of them been considered to be the true. Objections would lie even against this hypothesis; especially such as might be taken from the assurance of our Saviour himself, that false Christs in general would meet (and therefore we may presume did meet) with that success among his own countrymen, which had not attended, or should not attend, the true; and from the circumstance on which he insists so emphatically, to mark the distinction between those who were his true sheep, and those who were not; that the former were not, or should not, be deceived by these impostors, but the latter either had been, or would be.

Not, however, to insist upon these objections: the title of "him that was coming," so indefinitely and yet so confidently applied to the expected Messiah, is surely more natural and significant to express an expectation, which however general and unhesitating, had never been even partially realized by the event, than one which had. We know from other authorities besides the gospel, that the coming of the Christ was universally expected before the time when he was born; and that this expectation, having daily been gaining ground, was arrived at its height and become most ardent and enthusiastic, about the very time when the birth of our Lord took place. Is it to be supposed, then, that an expectation which had thus progressively advanced in strength and confidence, had ever experienced any check; had ever as yet been disappointed, so as to abate its force? But the appearance of false Christs, be-

fore the true—who of course could not succeed in being received as the true—and the disappearance of such Christs, in consequence of their failure and rejection, before the manifestation of the true; must have had some effect in weakening the expectation of the true. So long as the hopes of men have never been put to the test, nor been undeceived by the event, they may continue as sanguine as ever; and time itself, by rendering them the more impatient, may add only to their confidence and their undoubtingness: but it is not in the nature of things that they should retain their original ardour and elasticity, under repeated mortifications.

The first person who attracted the attention of his contemporaries, and raised a persuasion that he might possibly turn out to be the expected Christ, was John the Baptist¹: the next, as every one will readily admit, must have been our Lord himself. Between the appearance, then, of the first person whom the people would have willingly considered as the Messiah, and the appearance of that person who was really he, there was no longer an interval of time, than between the beginning of the ministry of John, and that of the ministry of Jesus Christ; an interval, at the utmost, only of six months. The character too, of John, not his professions—first excited this opinion concerning himself; and having no countenance from his own declarations, it amounted at best to a mere conjecture; and upon his taking advantage of the earliest opportunity, solemnly to disclaim the title that his countrymen would have bestowed upon him, and to bid them prepare for the

¹ Luke iii. 15—17. Cf. Matt. iii. 11, 12. Mark i. 7, 8. Acts xiii. 25. Harm. P. ii. 4.

appearance of another and a much greater person, after him, who should be the Messiah whom they were all expecting; it seems, as far as John was concerned, to have been set completely at rest. Would this expectation, however, have been raised concerning John so spontaneously, merely because he was a person of extraordinary character and deportment—differing in his habits of life from other men—and though certainly a preacher of repentance and righteousness, and so far a prophet or teacher sent from God, yet no worker of miracles, nor in any one respect answerable, or likely to answer, to that preconceived idea of the future Messiah, which all the nation had formed; had not John been actually the first person, on whom public opinion, now excited to the utmost, and impatient for an object to fix upon, found an opportunity of fastening, for the solution of so interesting and natural a question, as whether the expected Messiah had appeared at last in his person, or not?

The appearance of pretenders to the name of the Christ, before the time of the true Messiah, would necessarily have been prejudicial to the success of his mission; not merely by contributing to damp the ardour of the national expectation of his coming, but by impairing before his appearance, his credit and reputation. It is not easy for the world at large to draw the needful distinctions, between things externally the same. Repeated experience of false Christs would have taught the most credulous to be suspicious of the true. The failure of such impostors, as well as their success, might have been equally injurious to the cause of the true Christ; the one, by predisposing men's minds to be distrust-

ful of his appearance and pretensions ; the other, by preoccupying their belief and persuasion in behalf of false Christs.

It is not, indeed, credible that any such character as a false pretender to the name of the National Messiah, could have appeared among the Jews before the time of our Saviour, and yet that his enemies should never have endeavoured to turn that fact into an argument against his reception by the people. It would have afforded the most specious and plausible of objections to the truth of his claims, had they been able to remind the people, from their own experience, of the rise of many pretenders to the same character, in which he was appearing, who had turned out to be deceivers and impostors. The providence of God ordained it otherwise ; that the national rejection of Jesus of Nazareth should be due to no such cause, nor justifiable, however falsely, on any such ground of excuse, as this : but solely to the incongruity between *his* personal demeanour, professions, and history, and that kind and description of Messiah, which before his appearance they had pictured to their own imaginations ; and which, after his manifestation, in spite of every argument to the contrary, they were determined alone to receive.

It may, indeed, be made to appear, that the rise and success of false Christs was a judicial dispensation ; which must be resolved into one of the extraordinary effects of the moral government of God. The reception of these pretenders was a punishment in kind for the rejection of the true Christ ; the national impenitence and blindness, which had prevented the recognition and confession of the true, being thus resented in the most deserved and ap-

propriate manner, by a national infatuation in favour of false Christs. A purpose and an effect, like these, however, presuppose the appearance, the trial, and the rejection of the true Christ, before the rise, and much more the success, of even a single false Christ; just as the infliction of punishment on a criminal, for some offence, presupposes the fact of the crime, and the consequent contraction of his guilt^r.

There are only two passages throughout the gospels, besides the present, in which we meet with a clear reference to the coming and reception of false Christs; and in both this reference is to something still future. The first of them occurs, John v. 43^s: where our Lord was purposely contrasting the treatment which he himself had experienced, with that which such persons as these should meet with;

^r It is not, indeed, impossible that even the appearance of the true Christ, in his proper place and order first, followed by his rejection, might contribute something to the future reception and success of false Christs. If Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah—as he was the first who laid claim to that title, so, it is certain, he was not only the first, but the only one, who gave the Jews reason to believe that he laid claim to the title truly. No after pretender to the name of the Messiah ever exhibited such proofs of the reality of his pretensions, or ever excited so general and well-founded a persuasion that he would ultimately prove to be the Deliverer whom they all expected; as he did. The disappointment of this persuasion—no matter, from what cause—would tend to irritate and inflame the national impatience, already sufficiently excited; and would predispose them to receive the more readily, without inquiry and without hesitation, the tempting and flattering assurances of any one, who might take advantage of this heated and fretful state of the public mind; and whether an enthusiast or an impostor himself, should declare himself to be the Messiah of the public wish.

^s Harm. P. iii. 1.

both in their proper character, the one as the true, the other as false Christs; and both at the hands of the same people, his own contemporaries, those among whom his own ministry had been, and was still to be discharged.

“I am come in the name of my Father”—which is a clear description of one who came as the true Christ; “Yet ye receive me not:” which is as clear a declaration of his reprobation and rejection by his contemporaries, notwithstanding. “If another come in his own name;” which is a description of one who should come without right or authority from above, and therefore, as an impostor and deceiver; “That one ye will receive:” which foretells the success that even such an one should experience, with the same persons among whom the ministry of the true Christ had been discharged in vain.

Nor is it any objection that the fact of the coming of such false Christs is mentioned hypothetically; while it is still the case, that the fact of their success, if they did come, is predicted as certain. The point of the contrast turns upon this anomaly; that false Christs, if they came, should meet with that success, among the very same persons, which the true Christ, who was already come, had yet been unable to meet with among them. Nor was it possible for the positive assurance of the success they should meet with, to be fulfilled by the event, unless the assumption on which it rested, the supposition of their appearance, were also to be verified by the event. Meanwhile, this hypothetical mode of speaking about their coming, as still future, and possibly not to be substantiated by the fact, is the strongest presumptive argument that no such

persons had yet appeared. Reasoning too, as he was, professedly, on such a topic, and contrasting his personal reception, though the true Messiah, with that of others who might falsely lay claim to the title, it is scarcely credible that our Lord would not have reminded his hearers of the appearance and success of such deceivers formerly, had it been possible to do so; and thus have confirmed the probability of his predictions concerning the success of false Christs hereafter, by an appeal to the fact of their success, on divers occasions, heretofore.

The second mention of false Christs occurs in the course of the prophecy delivered on mount Olivet, in the form of repeated allusions to their appearance. That all these allusions are to be understood prophetically, it is impossible to doubt, both because of the plain meaning of the words themselves, and the scope and context of the whole discourse, and especially because of this circumstance, that the rise and appearance of such impostors are specially insisted on, as one of the signs or tokens, (and not the least equivocal or ambiguous of all,) which were to precede a *future* event—the commencement of the days of vengeance—and by their occurrence were to enable the observers, who had been instructed in their meaning, to judge of the proximity of the event betokened by them.

It is a remarkable coincidence, that each of the evangelists who record this memorable prophecy, represents it to have been begun in the same words: “Beware lest any one deceive you †,” or “Beware lest ye be deceived †:” for which this reason

† Matt. xxiv. 4, 5. Mark xiii. 5, 6.

‡ Luke xxi. 8. Harm. P. iv. 68.

is assigned, "For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and many they will deceive^x." Now every reader of the Gospels is no doubt familiar with a phrase, which occurs so often in them, as this, of "coming in the name of such and such a person:" but they may not be aware that in the sense in which it is here employed, it occurs no where but here.

Our Saviour speaks repeatedly (he spoke in the passage last considered) of his own coming in the name of the Father: and he speaks repeatedly of the coming, or going forth, of the apostles and other emissaries of Christianity, in his name. In each of these cases, the meaning of the phrase is one and the same; the going forth or coming of one person, in the authorized capacity of a person commissioned and sent by another, who has power to commission and send him, for a proper purpose; and consequently the going forth and coming of one who acts as the delegate, the minister, the deputy and vicegerent of another. It was thus that Christ himself came in the name of the Father; and that the apostles and other emissaries of Christianity, when they entered upon their commission, went forth in the name of Christ.

It is certain, however, that the phrase, "coming in my name," can have no such meaning in the present instance: and that our Lord cannot be cautioning the persons to whom he is speaking, to beware of those who should come in his name in that sense. The signification of the terms, then, is to be determined in this instance, by what follows immediately in the sentence, explanatory of them: "Many

^x Matt. xxiv. 4, 5, &c.

“ will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ.” Their coming in the name of Christ, then, and their saying or professing, who so came, that they were the Christ, must imply the same thing. Whatever, therefore, may be the meaning of the phrase, “ coming in my name,” elsewhere; it stands here for “ coming in the name, which is *mine*; coming with “ the assumption, and in the profession of that character, which belongs of right to none but me— “ the character of the Christ—that is, of the one “ *true* Christ as opposed to all *false* Christs.”

Now what difference would there be, we may ask, between saying, “ Many will come *in my name*,” so understood, and saying, “ Many will come *instead*,” or “ *in the place, of me?*” which we have supposed to be the true meaning of the phrase, John x. 8, which is rendered in the English by, “ Before me.” To come in the name which belongs to Christ, and to come in the stead, or in place of, Christ, if both mean to come in the overt character of the true Messiah, a character which belonged of right to none but Christ—must be equivalent expressions.

Such comers in the name which belonged solely to himself, are styled by our Saviour in the course of this same prophecy on mount Olivet, *ψευδόχριστοι*, false or fictitious Christs; bearing in that capacity the same relation to himself, the *ἀληθῆς Χριστός* or the true Christ, as a *ψευδοπροφήτης* or false teacher, a *ψευδαπόστολος* or false apostle, would bear to a true. No one needs to be reminded, that all imposture and deception begin with assuming the appearance, at least, of reality; and trust for their success to the belief and persuasion of that reality. A false pro-

phet, a false apostle, and a false Christ, could have no being unless there were also a true prophet, a true apostle, a true Christ; whose name, whose character, whose commission and office, might be intruded into and usurped by them. Such pretenders to the name of Christ which was not theirs, appearing notwithstanding, and claiming to be received on the credit thereof, as much as if it was, were properly Antichrists, or Prochrists—*instead of* the true Christ, as well as *opposed to* him; usurpers of his name and title at first, as well as by their own success and influence, dangerous to his, and obstacles to the acknowledgment of his just rights and expectations, afterwards^y.

To the above considerations we may add the following; which, of itself, is competent to decide the question at issue, whether the words of the verse, under discussion, must be supposed to contain a prediction of the future, or a recapitulation of the past. There is historical testimony to the rise and appearance of false Christs, *after* the time of our Saviour; but not the least evidence from history of their existence, *before*. No fact is better authenticated than that of a succession of false Christs, beginning with the Samaritan impostor who appeared in the last year of Tiberius, down to the time of Barchochab towards the close of the reign of Hadrian; and especially during the interval between the ascension of our Lord, and the commencement of the Jewish war. But there is not an intimation to be found in any quarter, whether sacred or profane, which would lead to the inference that such a personage, as one

^y Vide General Introd. chapter xi. part ii. vol. i. p. 372. note.

who whether truly or falsely, yet publicly laid claim to the title and character of the promised Messiah, had ever been seen among the Jews, or was known to have existed, before the birth of Jesus Christ.

I am aware that, in making this assertion, I am liable to be reminded of the testimony of Gamaliel in the Acts of the Apostles ^z, who speaks of two persons, Theudas, and Judas of Galilee; of both of them, as persons who had appeared within the memory of the parties whom he was addressing; and persons, as it seems, whom we must consider to be spoken of in the character of pretenders to the name of Christ. This presumption, however, will turn out upon inquiry, to be far from the truth; and to be founded altogether in a misconception of the true personal character of each of those individuals.

To begin with Judas, though the later in point of time, as the better known and more remarkable of the two. Josephus has twice mentioned him, once in the Antiquities ^a, and again in his History of the War ^b; each time, professedly to give an account of the rise, the designs, the principles and actions of the man. Let these accounts be perused, and compared together. It will clearly appear from their united testimony, that he laid claim to no such religious character as that of the Messiah; he rose up, and enacted the part of a mere political leader. His own principles, in general respects, were those of the Pharisees; and he was joined and supported in his insurrection by a partisan, as prominent and active as himself, Zadok the Pharisee. The object

^z Acts v. 36, 37.

^a Ant. Jud. xviii. i. 1.

^b B. Jud. ii. viii.

of their attempt was to assert the Theocracy, which had once existed among the Jews; to inspire the nation with a spirit of independence on any human master; to own and avow no allegiance to any but God. Its exciting cause was the necessity of submission to a Roman census, and the imposition of a permanent tribute to the Roman government; which Augustus thought proper to order, upon the removal of Archelaus, U.C. 760, and carried into effect by the instrumentality of Quirinius, the president of Syria. No such tribute had ever before been imposed by the Romans; and consequently it was the first overt badge of slavery, or dependence on a foreign power, which the nation of the Jews had yet endured. As the advocates of principles which were intended to avert this national disgrace, Judas and Zadok professed to be actuated by a zeal for the honour of God, and for the assertion of prerogatives belonging exclusively to him; and therefore they and their followers were called Ζηλωταί, or Zealots.

Yet Josephus reckons up the party, which was formed and organized by these two leaders, as a *sect*, a philosophical αἵρεσις or party, (these are his own words,) just as much as any other of the three principal divisions of the same kind, previously in existence among his countrymen—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. And even as such, the sect of the Zealots is hardly to be distinguished from that of the Pharisees—the religious and moral opinions of both being the same; and even their notions of civil liberty and independence differing no further than this, that the Zealots avowed and acted upon such principles; the Pharisees, with more

prudence and worldly wisdom, cherished the same persuasions in secret, but did not openly profess them.

It would be a mistake, therefore, to regard the founder of this sect in any light but that of a political partisan; and not a religious fanatic. The name of a Christ or a prophet is never given to him; nor is there any proof that it was assumed by him. There was nothing apparently, except the difference of results, to discriminate the nature of *his* attempt, in the days of Augustus, from that of the attempt of Judas Maccabæus, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Yet who ever thought of calling Judas Maccabæus, or any other of the Maccabees, an aspirant to the character of the expected Messiah? If Judas of Galilee set himself up in the capacity of a liberator; if he promised the nation the recovery of its independence, by the cooperation even of God himself; this was no more than the direct consequence of his principles. The sect of the Zealots, his followers, still subsisted in abeyance, according to Josephus, even after U. C. 760; and they started into being openly, and became the principal instruments of plunging the nation into its last and most fatal contest with Rome, U. C. 819^c.

^c The character of Judas of Galilee, and the nature of his attempt, may perhaps be best estimated from what Josephus records of his sons or connexions, and of *their* views and attempts also. It is to be supposed that they inherited their father's principles, and that what they wished to do was just the same as he likewise had desired to effect. Now they appear in every instance to have been mere political adventurers; whom even Josephus never thinks of confounding with the other description of persons who also appeared and raised disturbances, during the same period; the impostors or false prophets, that is, the false Christs as such.

With regard to Theudas, whose appearance and attempt, such as they were, are said to have preceded those of Judas—it is extremely probable that he was altogether the same kind of person; but being much more inconsiderable, and less influential, he has been superseded in the notice of contemporary history, by the superior fame of the Gaulanite or Galilæan. The number of his followers is specified at only about “four hundred;” which argues that he had no very great success. My opinion is, that the attempt of this man arose out of the census at the nativity, U. C. 749 or 750, as that of Judas did, ten years afterwards, out of the census of Quirinius. The former census was not exactly like the latter; nor so much a mark of national degradation and dependence as that was. Yet being imposed by command of the Roman emperor, if it went no further than a mere enrolment of names, and affected Judæa no more than the rest of the world, still there was enough in it for an enthusiast or visionary, like a Zealot, to lay hold of, and convert into a pretext for rebelling against the constituted

U. C. 799 or 800, A. D. 46 or 47. Tiberius Alexander, the procurator of Judæa for the time being, put to death two of the sons of Judas, Jacob (or James) and Simon; who were attempting to raise an insurrection. Ant. xx. v. 2.

U. C. 819, A. D. 66. Manahem, another of his sons, on the sixth of Gorpiaëus (August or September) got possession of the fortress of Masada, and afterwards of Jerusalem; where, for a short time, he made himself *τύραννος*, or tyrant, until he was assassinated. B. ii. xviii. 8, 9.

On his death, a kinsman of his, and we may presume of Judas, Eleazar, son of Jair, fled to Masada. What ultimately became of him and of his followers there, U. C. 826 or 827, A. D. 73 or 74, Josephus relates, B. vii. viii, ix.

authorities. Nor is it improbable that the Pharisees were implicated on this occasion also, as well as on the next. We read at least, in Josephus, of some necessity, under which Herod was placed, of inflicting a fine upon their body for an act of insubordination, about this time; which act was most probably connected with the census, and with the question of obedience or disobedience to the commands of the Roman emperor, arising out of it^d.

It is certain, at least, from the nature of the reasoning of Gamaliel, that he intended to appeal to these two attempts, abortive as they proved, solely as the attempts of *men*; and therefore, most probably, known to have been more of a purely civil or political character, than mixed up in any way, with the religious one of the title or question of the expected Messiah. Besides which, with regard to the point at issue, whether our Saviour can be supposed to have had either of these attempts in his own mind, when he spoke of those who had come *before* him, (construe the verse, as we may, to that effect,)—if he alluded to a time anterior to his own birth, they must both have been excluded by it—the one as just coincident with it; the other as ten years later than it^e.

^d Ant. Jud. xvii. ii. 4. Cf. my Dissert. vol. i. Diss. iv. App. i. and iii. and Diss. xii.

^e With respect, indeed, to Theudas, were we to adopt *their* conjecture, who believe the Theudas of the Acts to have been the same person, who is mentioned by Josephus as an impostor and false prophet that appeared in the time of the Roman procurator of Judæa, Cuspius Fadus, under the emperor Claudius Cæsar; no such person could have been intended by our Saviour, in an historical reference to any *before* him. I do not acquiesce in this conjecture; which I consider the most unjust

Lastly, should it be objected that if we understand the text to contain a prophecy, and though expressed in terms of the past, really to refer to the future, we give it an obscurity which would render it unintelligible, at least to its immediate hearers; I answer, that our Lord was purposely ambiguous, and did not intend or expect to be understood; that his language is not more obscure in this one verse, than it is throughout; nor is it more surprising that he should be found studious of concealment in those communications which related to the truth of his own character, and to the nature of his offices and relations, as the head of the Christian church, than in those which referred to the *secrets* of the kingdom, or to the future history of the Christian dispensation.

To proceed then, to the second of our proposed inquiries, which concerns the words of the twelfth verse, as the first did those of the eighth; “But the hired *keeper*,” (*English Bible*, “the hireling,”) &c. The adoption of the term, *hireling*, to render the original noun in this instance, is objectionable, because it includes the idea of contempt or reproach; a sentiment which, it appears to me, is far from being insinuated by the Greek.

The word (*μισθωτός*) in its proper sense denotes a person, who is hired or engaged for money, to perform some service in behalf of another: and in the present passage, as entering into a description and unwarrantable reflection on the accuracy of St. Luke, imaginable. For if any historian, either sacred or profane, ever shewed himself by a variety of convincing proofs, better informed on the facts, or more scrupulously faithful in the details of his accounts, than another; that historian, I should say, was St. Luke.

like this, the kind of hired servant denoted by the term more particularly, can be nothing but an hired keeper of sheep. Now in a country like Judæa, where property consisted mainly of flocks and herds, and flocks and herds were consequently large and numerous; hired servants, answering to this description, must have been a very necessary and very common class of persons. Servants such as these, under ordinary circumstances would represent the owner of the flocks committed to their care, as being charged with their custody and protection in his stead; and therefore, would be just as much opposed to aliens or strangers, in respect of the sheep, as the owner himself. Under ordinary circumstances, too, they might take good care of the sheep; and neither lose nor destroy what had been entrusted to their keeping, any more than the owner himself. Under ordinary circumstances then, they might be just as much opposed to thieves and robbers, who would seek the destruction and not the safety of the sheep, as the master and proprietor himself.

It is possible however, that under extraordinary circumstances—under circumstances differing from the ordinary circumstances of his trust—an hired keeper might prove unfaithful to his trust, because he was an hired keeper, and not the rightful owner of the sheep. It is in reference to an extreme case like this, that our Saviour opposes his own character and conduct in relation to the sheep, to those of a merely hired keeper. The hired keeper may see the wolf coming, and forsake the sheep to take to flight himself; that is, the hired keeper may not be disposed to hazard his own life, much less to sacrifice it, in behalf of the sheep: the good shepherd, under

the same circumstances, will stay to protect the sheep, and if need be, will even lay down his life in defence of the sheep. If the hired keeper flees, leaving the sheep to their fate, it is because he is an hired keeper, and because the sheep are not his own; if the good shepherd lays down his life in behalf of the sheep, it is because he has the interest of a master, and the feeling of a friend and lover, in the safety of the sheep.

It is evident then, that our Lord means to oppose himself to the hired servant, only as the ποιμήν ὁ καλὸς is opposed to the ποιμήν ὁ μισθωτός: as one who is really and truly the shepherd of the sheep, and proves it by his conduct under the most trying circumstances, in their behalf, must stand contradistinguished to one who is merely nominally so, and for a time; to one who will discharge the duty of a keeper towards them, so long as there is nothing to fear for himself, but will renounce his trust and abandon the sheep, when there is: to one consequently, who has a greater reality of individual interest, and a greater feeling of personal affection, in and towards himself, than in and towards the sheep.

The expressiveness of the descriptive appellation of the ποιμήν, ὁ καλὸς, "the shepherd, the good one," to whomsoever it may apply, is such as can be adequately represented only by the combination of two characteristic distinctions in one person, both of them applicable to him alone; the distinction of being the rightful owner of the sheep; and that of being the true lover of the sheep. The possession of these individual distinctions however, by any one person in particular, can be proved by nothing, or

by nothing so effectually, as the conduct of the party himself, in such an emergency as *exclusively* concerns his specific relation to the sheep; where his love for himself, and his attachment to his charge, are placed as it were, in direct opposition to each other; and the one would require one thing, for his own sake, the other, just the reverse, for the sake of his trust. Whosoever has the interest of a master in the property of the sheep, is the rightful owner of the sheep; and whosoever has the motive of a personal affection to desire the safety and welfare of the sheep, is the true lover of the sheep. No master or owner could like to see his property wasted or destroyed; no friend or lover could behold the object of his attachment exposed to danger, and not wish to rescue him, if possible, from it.

Tried by either of these criterions, therefore, if Christ should lay down his life for his sheep—the relation of Christ to the sheep must be that of the rightful owner and the true lover of the sheep: tried by either of these criterions, therefore, the relation of Christ to the sheep must be that of their good and their true shepherd, and not of one merely engaged for hire in his stead. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose that actual persons are meant by the allusion to the hired servant, in this instance, just as real persons were, in the reference before to thieves and robbers. Our Saviour does not say, “All who came,” or “shall come, instead of me, are mere hired keepers, and not the good shepherds, of the sheep;” as he said, “All who shall come instead of me, are thieves and robbers;” in opposition to the true owners of the sheep. A false Christ, indeed, who might justly be called a thief and a robber—a plun-

derer and destroyer, of the flock—to distinguish him from one who was their legitimate master, and their natural guardian and protector; still could not, on any principle, have been represented as an hired servant, engaged in the service of the lawful owner, and fulfilling by his office, for the time, the duties of the true shepherd of the sheep. And as to any others, who may be supposed to be denoted by the name, distinct from Christ himself, yet standing in a specific relation, like his, to the sheep; the hired keepers of the flock of Christ, strictly speaking, are the established orders of the ministry appointed over his church, and entrusted with its care in his behalf. There was such a ministry before among the Jews; as there has always been since among Christians; and the Jewish church, until the promulgation of Christianity, was as much the flock of Christ as the Christian has been since.

It would be absurd, however, to suppose that our Lord is contrasting his own character and relations, in quality of the good shepherd, even with those of such persons as these, in the same sense in which one real person must be distinct from, and may be contrasted with, another. The relation of the good shepherd applies to Christ in his own right, and in the abstract; and it would be equally true of him, and equally applicable to him, were there nothing else with which to contrast or compare it. So far, however, as in certain essential and indispensable requisites to their own perfection, the character and relation of the good shepherd involve an opposition to the character and relation of a merely hired servant; so far the character and relation of the good shepherd, as belonging to Christ

in the abstract, are opposed to those of the merely hired keeper in the abstract also. Whosoever in those respects is the good shepherd, is necessarily no hired shepherd. By shewing, therefore, that Christ should lay down his life for his sheep, it is shewn in the strongest and clearest manner, that he united in himself the most essential conditions to the character and relation of the good shepherd of the sheep; and by shewing that he did so, it is not less plainly and necessarily implied that he could be no mere hired shepherd.

We have thus disposed of these two questions; but before we proceed to the more particular consideration of the allegory itself, there is still another distinction, of some importance to its being rightly understood, which requires a preliminary explanation.

It is evident, that in the first half of the discourse our Saviour speaks of the *door of the fold*: and in the second, of the *door of the sheep*: and these two things, though seemingly very like each other, yet under the circumstances of the case, cannot possibly be the same. The door of the sheep, our Saviour affirms to be himself; and though this door of the sheep, as such, may be the door of their admission into the fold, still, if our Saviour himself in any sense constitutes this door to *them*, he cannot, in the same sense, constitute it to *himself*; that is, the door by which the sheep gain admission into the fold, cannot under the circumstances of the case, be the same with that by which their shepherd gets admission into it also. If our Saviour himself is denoted by this shepherd, he cannot be the door of admission for and in behalf of himself,

as he is said to be, and as he may be that, for and in behalf of his sheep.

The distinction, then, of one mode of admission for the sheep into their proper fold, which we may call the *door of the sheep*, and of another mode of admission for the shepherd into his, which we may denominate the *door of the shepherd*; seems to follow as a necessary consequence. Now admission through and by the door of the fold, is spoken of in opposition to admission by any other way; and consequently, as one of the characteristics of the rightful owner and shepherd of the sheep, in contradistinction to strangers and intruders of every description. Admission through the door of the fold, therefore—that is, admission through the door of the shepherd—is that mode of coming and seeking and obtaining a reception within the fold, containing the sheep, which is characteristic of their rightful owner and their true shepherd. But the mode of coming and seeking and obtaining admission into his own fold, in search of his own sheep, which is characteristic of their owner and shepherd, as such—that is, the mode of coming and seeking and obtaining admission into the fold, through the door of the shepherd—is the mode of coming and seeking and obtaining a reception, among the people of God, in quality of their Messiah, which is characteristic of the true Messiah. Hence, should any one inquire what is the mode of coming and seeking and obtaining admission within his own fold, which is thus characteristic of the true Messiah; then, if Christ was that true Messiah, the answer to this question must be sought for in the facts of the history of Jesus Christ.

It is the mode of coming and seeking and obtaining admission into the bosom of the Jewish church, which was adopted by Jesus Christ. It is the mode which must be exemplified in the history of one, who was bound to come to seek and to obtain admission among his own, not in his own name, but in the name of the Father, who sent him; as Jesus Christ came. It is the mode which must be adopted by one, who was bound to profess that he came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him; as Jesus Christ professed. It is the mode which must be adopted by one, who should come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; not to lose aught which the Father had given him, but to seek and to recover if possible, even that which had been lost; as Jesus Christ came. It is the mode which must be exemplified in the history of one, who should come to fulfil the predictions of the ancient prophets: to accomplish and verify every thing which had been written before, concerning this very coming, in the Law of Moses, and in the Psalms, and in the Prophets; as Jesus Christ came. It was the mode in short, which could not fail to be adopted by one who was bound to appear in the character, and to act in the part, of a suffering Messiah; as Jesus Christ appeared and acted.

Should it be objected to this distinction, that to suppose one door for the shepherd, and another for the sheep, implies also the existence of a separate fold for each; which appears at first sight unnatural and improbable; I answer, that upon further consideration this very consequence, instead of being unnatural and improbable, will be found to be highly consistent and reasonable. Let it be granted merely,

that the door, and therefore the fold, of the shepherd, as such, are to be understood of that fold and of the mode of gaining admission into it, where the true shepherd is first to find his true sheep; but the door, and consequently the fold, of the sheep, as such, are to be understood of that fold within which, and of that door of admission into it through which, he places or congregates by themselves, the true sheep, after he has found them. On this supposition, the distinction in question becomes very natural and probable.

And this, as we observed some time ago, appears to be the proper business of the first part of the discourse, considered as preliminary to the second; viz. to shew how the true shepherd as such, first gains admission into the fold which contains the true sheep as such, before he does any thing further with them; that is, before he takes them out of their former fold to place them in a new one: and how the true sheep, on the other hand, recognise and acknowledge him, on his first appearance among them, as their true shepherd, even before they are placed in any new, or any nearer relation to him, as the members of another fold.

An ancient fold, especially among the Jews, being so large and capacious a building, would doubtless contain more flocks than one, belonging to more masters, and committed to the care of more shepherds, than one. Any one of these might come in the way, in which the true shepherd is supposed to come, seeking and obtaining admission through the legitimate entrance—in order to find the sheep of his own flock, the part of the whole fold committed to his individual care; and any one of these, having

obtained admission into the fold, might call forth his own from their pens, be recognised by them, and putting himself at their head, might lead them obediently forth to pasture, or whithersoever else he might be inclined. And this presumption of the state of the case will be greatly confirmed in the opinion of classical readers, by the absence of the Greek article in speaking of such a shepherd; a circumstance not to be accounted for, if one such shepherd alone, answering to this description, must be supposed to be meant. Ὁ δὲ εἰσερχόμενος διὰ τῆς θύρας, ποιμήν ἐστι τῶν προβάτων: “But he that entereth in through the door, is a shepherd of the sheep;” not, “is *the* shepherd of the sheep.”

It will no doubt be admitted that Jesus Christ is the real person, who is represented by the character and relation of the true Shepherd, from the first; it will also be conceded that the purpose of his coming in that capacity, was to found the Christian church; and that the Christian church, though formed in the bosom of the Jewish, yet consisting exclusively of believers in Jesus Christ, must be distinguished from the Jewish as such. Yet the Jewish church, before the foundation of the Christian, was the only existing visible church; and the first Christian believers themselves, who composed the congregation of the first Christian church, had previously been members of the Jewish. The Jewish church then, before the formation of the Christian, was as much the fold of God, as the Christian afterwards; but the Christian, which superseded it afterwards, was more properly the fold of the Messiah, than the Jewish had been before it, and much more, than the Jewish continued to be after it. The head of the

Jewish church, notwithstanding, as well as the head of the Christian, was always Christ; for the God of the Christians was the God of the Jews; nor can either be distinguished from Jesus Christ.

In coming then to the Jews, even as the Messiah of the Christian dispensation, Jesus Christ came to his *own*, though his own, as a body, received him not. In coming to the Jews therefore, even in that capacity, he came to his *own* fold, and as the Shepherd of his *own* flock: and though all of his own received him not, yet neither did all reject him; a part of his own, however few or inconsiderable in comparison of the rest, received him as what he was, and acknowledged him as their Shepherd, in his proper relation to themselves, as his sheep. If it was known to our Lord, as we are told it was, from the first, who should receive him and who should not; it was known to him from the first, what this part was by whom he should be recognised as their proper Shepherd, though treated as a stranger and intruder by the rest. This was the part therefore, however small and limited in comparison of the whole, which he may fitly be said to have come expressly in search of, among the rest—to find in the midst of his fold, and to claim as his own out of a much larger body—as that true and individual share of the flock, which belonged in reality to the Messiah, amidst all that nominally belonged to God.

Now whosoever among the Jews received Jesus Christ, became by that act a Christian; and whosoever became a Christian, became a member of a religious society, differing from the Jewish; a society discriminated by new external badges of dis-

inction, subject to new laws and regulations, and comprehended within the pale of an independent visible church. What was this, but for the Messiah, in his proper capacity of Shepherd, to take that part of the members of the existing Jewish church, in their proper character of the sheep, which truly and really belonged to himself, *out* of their ancient fold, to be placed by themselves *in* another—not so that they should lose their former relation to himself as their Shepherd, or he his own to them as his flock, but so as to retain it in a manner peculiarly theirs, and no longer capable of being divided with others, who were not really like themselves, as much the flock of the Messiah in particular, as they were nominally members of the fold of God in general?

The metaphor, by which the same person who is described as the Shepherd of the sheep, is also figuratively styled the door of their admission into the fold, was probably derived from the circumstance, that as the Shepherd preceded the flock in all their motions, so he must have preceded them both into and out of the fold; which, by no very violent straining of analogy, especially if allowance be made for the peculiar idiom of eastern thought and language, might cause the Shepherd to appear, and justify his being called in some sense, the door of the fold to his sheep^f. But the spiritual import of the figure as applied to the Messiah, it is impossible to mistake. For if the fold which receives the sheep, is the Christian church; and if the sheep comprehended within it, are the congregation of faith-

^f The phrase, *τὴς ἢ θύρα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*, occurs two or three times over, in Hegesippus' account of the martyrdom of James the Just. Euseb. *E. H.* ii. xxiii. 64. A. D.

ful believers, which compose that church; the door of admission, by which the sheep are received into *that* fold, is the door of admission by which believers are admitted into *this* church. And if the Shepherd is the door of the one, Christ Jesus is the door of the other: if there is no admission into the fold, except by and through their Shepherd, for the sheep, neither is there any admission into the church, except by and through Jesus Christ, for such as believe in him. It is faith in Christ, it is the public profession of reliance on the merits of a crucified Redeemer, which is appointed as the first, the most indispensable, and almost the only condition of becoming a Christian, and of being admitted to the spiritual privileges which belong to that relation. If baptism receives us into the Christian church, baptism is administered in the name of Christ, and with a significant allusion to his death and resurrection, as the ground both of our faith and hope: if we are incorporated by admission into the church, amongst any society, it is the society which composes the mystical body of Christ: if we are built by that incorporation, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself is still the basis of all—the cornerstone which cements the building, and blends both the parts into one superstructure, by belonging alike to each, and giving solidity, strength, and coherency to the whole.

We must now proceed to consider the characteristic qualities and distinctions of the mystical Shepherd, such as the allegory sets them forth in so great a variety of ways; though as much has been said about them already, it is necessary that in what remains to be observed, we should be as brief as

possible. These characteristic distinctions are not stated in the original, after a formal or methodical manner; we are at liberty therefore to arrange and explain them, in what order we please. It appears accordingly, on a general inspection of them, that some of them are more particular than others; some of them produce their effect by describing the Messiah as what he is, others, as what he is not: the former are consequently his positive, the latter his negative attributes; the former are individual characteristics which belong and apply to him in his own right; the latter are circumstances of difference which oppose all others to him, and him to all others, whether as strangers in general, or as thieves and robbers, or hired keepers, in respect of the sheep, in particular.

As opposed to strangers in general, the true Messiah, by whom we must understand our Saviour to be meant throughout, is not one, who before his coming to the fold, has no right of property in the sheep, before his reception into it, has no personal knowledge of the sheep. The mode of his coming to it therefore, is not the mode which would be adopted by a stranger—intrusive, clandestine, or violent—but such as would become the owner of the sheep, the master of the fold—regular, open, and peaceable. Nor is the nature of his reception by the sheep such as sheep would naturally give to a stranger, but such as sheep who knew, and were known by their owner, could not fail to accord to him.

As opposed to thieves and robbers in particular, that is, to all false pretenders to the name of the Christ—the true Messiah is not the plunderer and de-

stroyer, but the guardian and preserver of his flock ; nor is it the end or effect of his coming, as it would be of theirs, to kill and to slay the sheep, for his own sake ; but to keep them alive, and to feed them in plenty and security, for theirs ^s.

As contradistinguished to a merely hired keeper of sheep—the true Messiah is not only the shepherd, but himself the owner of his sheep. He has not consequently, the temporary engagement of a mercenary trust, nor the precarious motive of a suborned affection, to desire the safety and well-being of the sheep ; but the permanent interest of a master and proprietor, and the constant sympathy of a natural friend and protector. He will love the sheep, as he loves himself, and will study their welfare, as he studies his own. He will not continue with them, to discharge, however faithfully, the duties of his trust in their behalf, under ordinary circumstances merely, and while there is nothing to fear for himself ; but he will prove himself most eminently the faithful keeper and guardian of the sheep—the true lover and protector of his charge—in an extreme case, when every other would desert them, and take to flight—by standing forward as the champion of the flock, in the hour of danger ; encountering their enemies as he would his own ; defending their lives from the ravages of the wolf, at the risk of his personal safety ; and if there is no

^s Maximus Tyrius, Diss. xxv. 4: διώκων νύκτα καὶ ὁμίχλην

Ποιμέσιν οὔτι φίλην,

κλέπτῃ δέ τ' ἀγαθήν. ὁ μὲν ποιμένι ἔοικεν, ὁ δὲ κλέπτῃ ἔοικεν, καὶ λανθάνειν εὐχεται· οἶδε γὰρ τὸ κακὸν ὁ δρᾶ, ἀλλὰ εἰδὼς ὑφ' ἡδονῆς ἔλκεται. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς εὐκάρποις φυτοῖς ὁ μὲν γεωργὸς τημελῶς πρόσεισιν, ὁ δὲ κλέπτῃς ἐμπεσῶν δρέπει καὶ λυμαίνεται καὶ σπαράττει.

other means of ensuring the escape of the sheep, but through the death of the shepherd—(a supposition, eminently true of the necessity of the death of Christ to the salvation of mankind) he will sacrifice his life for theirs: he will save them by the devotion of himself to perish, in their stead.

On the other hand, among the circumstances of distinction which characterise the *personal* relation of the Messiah to his sheep, one of the most general is this; that the true Messiah is not simply the owner of a single flock, but the common owner of many flocks. He had sheep belonging to his fold, among the Jews, which he first came to claim as his own, and to appropriate to himself; and he had others belonging to his fold, elsewhere; which he should afterwards go and claim as his own, and appropriate to himself likewise. For it is to be remembered that the Messiah of Israel was also the God of all mankind; and the Saviour of the Jew was the Saviour of the Gentile. The mode of his coming unto the latter should therefore be the same as that of his coming unto the former; and the nature of his reception by the latter, should differ in no respect from the nature of his reception by the former: but whether among the Jews or the Gentiles, it should be everywhere such as sheep that knew their Shepherd, could not fail to give to him.

The final end of his coming, however, to the sheep of his fold elsewhere, from the nature of the case would be somewhat different from the end proposed by his coming in the first instance, to his sheep among the Jews. He came to the latter to claim them as his own, from the midst of their unbelieving countrymen, who were not his own; and

to form them into a distinct flock, within a distinct fold, by themselves. He should go to his sheep among the Gentiles, not only to claim them also as his own, from the midst of their unbelieving countrymen, and to form them also into a distinct society, consisting of none but his own; but likewise to incorporate them among his flock, and to receive them within the precincts of his fold, already in existence.

The fold of the Messiah, then, as such, is necessarily one and the same; and the flock of the Messiah, as comprehended within it, is one and the same likewise: but the former is the aggregate of innumerable particular folds, which make up one common fold, the latter of innumerable particular flocks, which form one common flock; just as the catholic or universal church is the complex of all individual churches, and the congregation of the catholic church is the aggregate of all particular congregations, throughout the world.

It follows therefore, that if the true Messiah is the Owner and Shepherd of any of his sheep, he is the Owner and Shepherd of all: if he is the Saviour and Redeemer of any of his sheep, (that is, if he lays down his life for any of his sheep,) he is the Saviour and Redeemer of all, he lays down his life for all. If he is known and received, in quality of their Owner, their Shepherd, their Saviour, and Redeemer, by any of his sheep, he is known and received in each of these capacities, by all; if in the same capacities he himself knows and recognises any of his sheep, as their proper Owner, their Keeper, their Saviour and Redeemer—he knows and recognises all.

This recognition, the parable asserts to be the most complete in itself, and the most reciprocal on both sides, which can possibly have place; because between parties who though not actually identified, are only not the same. It is the recognition of each by the other, in his proper relative or reciprocal character; in which point of view, to suppose either to be ignorant, or capable of being ignorant of the other, would be to suppose him ignorant, or capable of being ignorant of himself. It is the recognition of his sheep as such, by their Shepherd, and of their Shepherd as such, by his sheep. Nor could it be better illustrated or more clearly explained, than by another, of equal closeness and of the same mutual necessity; the recognition of the Father as such, by the Son; and of the Son as such, by the Father. It is in short, on the part of the redeemed, the recognition of their proper Redeemer, as of him whose own they are and must be, because bought by the price of his blood: and on the part of the Redeemer, it is the recognition of his proper redeemed, as of those for whom and for whom alone, the price of his blood was paid: a recognition, which like that to which it is compared—the recognition of the proper Father by the proper Son, and *vice versa*—must be immediate, instinctive, and reciprocal on both sides.

Lastly, if the true Messiah is the door of admission within his proper fold to any of his sheep, he is the door of admission to all; and if he is the guardian and protector, the feeder and tender of any of the sheep, whom he has received into his fold, he is the guardian and protector, the feeder and tender of all. If he is entitled in return to the

attachment and confidence, the trust and obedience of any of the sheep, whom he receives, maintains, and protects within his fold, he is entitled to the attachment and confidence, the trust and obedience of all.

That these are figurative modes of expression for the spiritual blessings on the one hand, which are derived to faithful Christians, through Christ, as the natural consequences of their spiritual relation to him; and for the spiritual returns on the other, which are due to him from his people on that account—their gratitude and attachment; their honour and reverence; their faith and trust; their submission and obedience—has been shewn at large already. It is necessary to observe further, only, that under the head of such blessings, whatever is requisite to the success of our spiritual career in this life, and must be communicated to us from above, is of course to be considered included; but the greatest of all, and that which is entitled to the warmest acknowledgments of all, is the proposed end and reward of our spiritual career itself; the hope and assurance of immortal life. Nor is it improbable that the future state of things under the millenary dispensation, might also be present to our Saviour's view, when he delivered this discourse; for to what can we refer with more propriety than to that future state, those most expressive indications of his care and concern for the flock, and of the benefits redounding thereby to them, which are implied in the following terms of the description: "I am the door: if one enter in through me, he shall be saved, and shall go in, and shall go out, and shall find pasture—I am come, that

“ (the sheep) may have life, and may have *it* abundantly?”

Such, I believe upon the whole to be the sense and interpretation, though after all, only a faint and imperfect outline of the utmost signification, of this beautiful but mystical allegory; almost the sole, and certainly the most complete and finished description of the personal relations and functions of the true spiritual Messiah, which occurs in the Gospels. Whether it is justly entitled to the name of a prophetic allegory, and how much of it is composed entirely of prophetic matter; must now be apparent. The very supposition on which it proceeds, viz. that Christ, as the true Messiah, is the true Shepherd of the sheep, referred to the time when the discourse was spoken, was matter of presumption, not of fact. For though he had appeared already among the Jews in the character of their Messiah, and so far was come to his fold in the character of the Shepherd of the sheep; he had not yet appeared in the character of a suffering Messiah—of a Messiah who had wrought the salvation of his sheep—nor therefore, had yet come to his fold in that capacity, which more than all demonstrated him to be the true lover and the faithful Shepherd of the sheep.

In the mean while, the rise and appearance of false Christs; their success with the unbelieving Jews; their total inability to succeed with the believing; the destruction which they should entail on themselves and their followers; the preservation of the believing Jews from participating in the same evils; the call of the Gentiles; the success of the gospel among them; the extension of the pale of

the church, first planted among the Jews, by degrees over the rest of the world ; the formation of a common religious society, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, as in one common fold, around the mother or parent church of Jerusalem, the original fold of Christ—all which are circumstances clearly alluded to or implied, in the course of the same allegorical description ; were circumstances simply and purely prophetic at the time.

I am not aware that the doctrine which denies the proper vicarious character of the death of Christ, and consequently its proper sacrificial or atoning virtue, derives any countenance from other parts of scripture, especially in the Gospel of St. John ; but I would appeal to the judgment of any candid and impartial reader, whether it is not totally repugnant to the nature and meaning of the whole of this allegory in particular. In what sense can Jesus Christ be strictly entitled to the relation and character of the true Shepherd of the Christian flock, except as their Saviour and Redeemer ? in what sense can he be opposed to a mere hired keeper of the sheep, except as such a keeper who would lay down his own life, if need were, to save the sheep ; which no merely hired keeper would do ? In what sense too, was it possible for him, as the Shepherd, to lay down his life for the sheep, except as a *sacrifice* of some kind in behalf of the sheep ; as a means of deliverance from some danger to the safety of the sheep, which was not to be averted from *them*, except by turning it upon *himself* ?

The expression so often repeated, and with so much emphasis, “ I lay down my life for the sheep,” would possess no meaning, or rather would assert a

falsehood ; if Christ was not really to lay down his life, and that too, in behalf of the sheep. Now the event of his crucifixion proved that he was to lay down his life ; that he asserted no falsehood when he asserted that : and on the strength of his own assurance, which asserts the final end of the fact as well as the fact, it is equally credible that he was to lay it down in behalf of the sheep ; that he asserted no falsehood when he asserted that.

The instance or kind too of death, which he supposes himself to undergo, is a proof that the death itself was vicarious ; that is, was such a mode of death as could not possibly befall the shepherd, except in behalf of the sheep. The shepherd is supposed to die in behalf of the sheep, by dying to resist the *wolf*. Now the wolf is an enemy to be dreaded only by the sheep. If the shepherd, then, was to die in opposing the wolf—in opposing an enemy formidable only to the sheep—an enemy, who would not, or could not, attack the shepherd, unless he voluntarily opposed him in defence of the sheep ; it requires no ingenuity to prove, it must be evident to common sense, that under such circumstances, the shepherd would meet with his death for, and in behalf of, the sheep : the death of the shepherd would be a sacrifice of self-devotion in behalf of the sheep : the shepherd would encounter that, instead of the sheep, which they must otherwise have encountered instead of him ; death from the fangs of the wolf. The death of the shepherd, under such circumstances, would be the salvation of the sheep ; and the safety of the shepherd, under the same, would have been the destruction of the sheep : just as our Lord died for mankind, and mankind were saved by his death :

but had not he died for mankind, they must have been obnoxious to eternal condemnation themselves.

The two last verses of the discourse, 17 and 18, do not properly belong to the allegory; yet they continue the same topics in plainer terms, and contain as strong an evidence of the proper divinity of Jesus Christ, as the rest of the discourse does of the proper atonement effected by his death. "Because
" of this thing doth the Father love me, that I lay
" down my life that I may take it again. No one
" taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myself.
" I have authority to lay it down, and I have au-
" thority to take it again. This commission re-
" ceived I from my Father."

The meaning of these words is, that in laying down his life, whether as a vicarious sacrifice or not, Christ was an agent perfectly free and unconstrained. The circumstances of his passion demonstrate that in suffering himself to be arrested, tried, and nailed to the cross, he acted willingly; it was in his power to have prevented all, if he had pleased: and in fixing the precise moment of the final separation of his soul from his body, in which act the sacrifice of his life as such properly consisted, we see further that he acted still the same voluntary part; and as one whose life itself was in his own disposal. The present declaration asserts also, that he should be just as voluntary and as unrestricted an agent, in fixing the time and manner of resuming his life, as he had been in parting with it. Either of these facts, in the opinion of an unprejudiced person, must be sufficient to prove that Christ was both properly God and properly man. For though he could die only as man, and consequently could

rise again only as man; yet he could lay down and resume his life, at his own option, he could exercise this absolute control over the disunion and the reunion of his soul and his body, only as God.

Nor is this all. It is clearly implied by the spirit and design of the whole passage, that the final end of this voluntary resumption of his life, after he had laid it down, was something which concerned the sheep as much as that voluntary parting with it, on their account, which had preceded. In other words; the death of Christ being a vicarious sacrifice in behalf of mankind, the efficacy of the sacrifice depended as much on the rising again as on the death of Christ: the final end of the death itself would not have been completed without the rising to life again.

A single verse of St. Paul's, in the Epistle to the Romans ^h, supplies the best commentary which can be produced, on this connexion between the dying and rising again of Christ, and the common end or purpose, proposed and effected by both. "Who was delivered (*to die*) because of our transgressions, and was raised (*to life*) because of our justification." "Because of our transgressions *or* offences," means, "because we were transgressors *or* offenders;" and "because of our justification" means, "because we were justified; because we were no longer transgressors *or* offenders, but just and righteous." This text asserts, then, that Christ was given up to die, because we were accounted sinners: and was raised again, because we were accounted righteous. Between the time of his death therefore, and that of his resurrection, the removal of our preexisting character of sinners, and the acquisition of our new

^h Chap. iv. 25.

character as righteous, must have taken place; both, as the effect and consequence of the death itself.

The death of Christ is thus declared to have been a proper vicarious sacrifice for the sins of men; of which the guilt of those sins was the cause, and the removal of that guilt, or the justification of the guilty, was the effect. His dying therefore, and his remaining for a time in a state of death, were a proof that this guilt both had deserved death and was not yet removed: his rising to life again from the dead, was a proof that the guilt of the same sin was at length removed; that the absolution of the sinners was now effected. The Father too, as desiring in his equal benevolence to mankind, their salvation, as much as the Son—is said to love him on this account, because he lays down his life in order to take it again: that is, because he lays down his life, to make so entire and perfect a satisfaction for the sins of men, as should be adequate for the justice of the Father to accept as an atonement, and should leave his good-will and mercy at liberty to work. For as had Christ never died, mankind never could have been saved; so had he continued in a state of death, or never had risen again, they never could have been justified. The nature of a vicarious sacrifice implies, that so long as the guilt in behalf of which it is offered, continues to be imputed, its punishment must continue to be inflicted; and *vice versa*, so long as the punishment continues to be endured, the guilt must continue to be imputed: the design of the sacrifice cannot yet be completed, the pardon of the guilty cannot yet be sealed. And therefore, our Saviour subjoins in the last place, to shew that in every

thing which he was about to do, both in laying down and in resuming his life, in behalf of the sheep, he was acting as the organ and minister of the Father's will; "This commandment," or rather, "This commission, received I of my Father."

The metaphorical description of the relation of a king to his subjects, as that of a shepherd to his sheep, occurs in Homer; and was much admired by the critics of antiquity as very original, and not less beautiful and expressiveⁱ. In what a variety of ways the same metaphor is applied in the books of the Old Testament, both before the time of Homer and after it, and not only to express the same relation but many others, will appear from the following references.

In the blessing of Jacob, pronounced on Joseph, the God of Israel is alluded to as the shepherd *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, or absolutely; which is the first instance of the use of the metaphor in the Old Testament^k. In many other passages, of later occurrence, his people are represented as his sheep, and God as their shepherd^l. God is represented also as the shepherd

ⁱ Philo Judæus, ii. 90. 32. De Mose: *καί μοι δοκεῖ, μὴ πρὸς δόξας τῶν πολλῶν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀλήθειαν ἐρευνωμένῳ τὸ πρᾶγμα, γελάτω δ' ὁ βουλόμενος· μόνος ἂν γενέσθαι βασιλεὺς τέλειος, ὁ τὴν ποιμενικὴν ἐπιστήμην ἀγαθός, ἐν ἐλάττοσι ζώοις παιδευθεὶς τὰ τῶν κρειπτόνων· ἀμήχανον γὰρ τὰ μεγάλα πρὸ τῶν μικρῶν τελεσθῆναι. Maximus Tyrius, Diss. xii. 7: *Κῦρος μὲν γὰρ ἠγάειτο Περσῶν, ὡς ποιμὴν θρεμμάτων, σῶζων τὸ αἰπόλιον καὶ τρέφων . . . καὶ μηδενὶ ἐφείεις λύκῳ βαρβάρῳ ἢ ἄρπαγι ἀναμιχθῆναι τῇ ἀγέλῃ. Καμβύσης δ' ἦν καὶ αὐθις Ξέρξης ἐκ ποιμένων ἀγαθῶν πονηροὶ λύκοι, κείροντες τὴν ἀγέλην, καὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἀπεληλαμένοι.**

^k Genesis xlix. 24.

^l Ps. lxxiv. 1: lxxix. 13: xc. 7: c. 3. Jeremiah, xxxi. 10: 1. 6. Ezek. xxxiv: xxxvi. 38. Micah, vii. 14.

even of an individual member of his church; or of the Messiah in particular^m. Moses is called in an eminent manner, the shepherd of the flock of Godⁿ. The Messiah is described by the attributes of the most gentle shepherd^o: and called the shepherd, absolutely^p. The judges, and the kings of Israel or Judah, are designated as shepherds; and their office is described as that of “feeding the people of God^q.” The people or subjects of these kings, are called sheep^r. Kings or princes generally are represented by the image of shepherds^s. The appointed teachers and instructors of the people of God, are called their pastors, whether their duty be well or ill discharged^t.

The most remarkable instance of an allegory pursued to any length, like the present, and if we make due allowance for the difference of style and manner, between the simple and elegant, the placid and amiable strain of the description in St. John, and the vehement and impassioned, the stern and objurgatory eloquence of Ezekiel, the most deserving to be compared with the present, occurs in the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel.

The vicarious relation of the ministers of religion to Jesus Christ, and his actual relation to his people, as that of the head of the church to its members, are no doubt the reason why both in the Old Testament

^m Ps. xxiii. ⁿ Isaiah lxiii. 11.

^o Isaiah xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 23—26. ^p Zechar. xiii. 7.

^q 2 Sam. v. 2: vii. 7. 1 Chron. xi. 2: xvii. 6. Ps. lxxviii. 71.

^r 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. 1 Chron. xxi. 17.

^s Jerem. xii. 10: xxv. 34—36. Micah v. 5. Zechar. x. 3. Nahum iii. 18.

^t Jerem. iii. 15: x. 21: xxii. 22: xxiii. 1—4: 1. 6. Ezek. xxxiv.

and in the New, the office of the ministers of religion in respect of the people, is represented as that of pastors or shepherds, who have the charge of the flock of Christ. The choice of our church, therefore, in selecting this portion of St. John's Gospel as a part of the service for the ordination of her priests, is not to be blamed; provided we do not suppose that by the relation and character of the shepherd in the allegory, in their primary sense, we are to understand those even of a good minister of religion, and however lawfully commissioned, to be meant. That relation and character, as we have seen, can agree only to those of the great Shepherd himself—from whom even the ministers of his religion derive their commission; and as acting in behalf of whom, in the care and government of his church, even the ministers of his religion are to be considered as standing in the relation of merely *μισθωτοὶ*—of keepers or pastors of his sheep, engaged in his service, and discharging towards them the duties of a shepherd in his stead.

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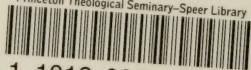
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